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MARCH

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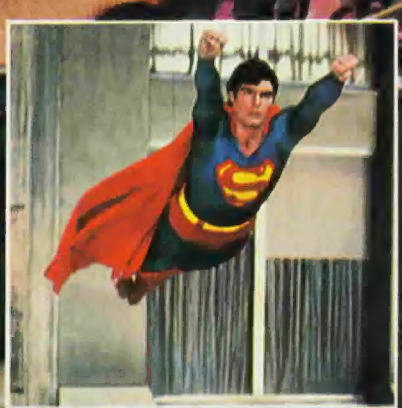

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MARCH

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About the Cover: Jack Kirby sits at his drawing table, surrounded by his latest in a long line of creations, *Captain Victory and his Galactic Rangers.* Kirby pencilled the characters and the cel was executed by Alan Huck and Ric Gonzalez, two of the talented people he works with at Ruby-Spears. Sam Emerson took the cover photo. Art and characters ©1982 Jack Kirby Inc., *Judge Dredd* ©1982 IPC Magazines Ltd.; *Superman* ©1982 DC Comics Inc.; *Kermit and Miss Piggy* characters ©1982 Henson Associates, art ©1982 King Features Syndicate.

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Word Balloons

The Last Training Ground

No one probably gave much thought to DC's announcement that *Secrets of Haunted House Unexpected* and *Ghosts* were to be cancelled. Most might think, "Who read those poor mystery comics anyway?" What fans and aspiring creators don't realize immediately is that those titles provided the training ground for tomorrow's top talent.

Many of today's biggest writers and artists got their break by doing stories under the tutelage of Joe Orlando and Dick Giordano, when those two were editing DC's line of mystery titles. The names of those mystery comic graduates include Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, Len Wein, Marv Wolfman and Arthur Suydam. When people wanted to break into comics, they were directed to the mystery comics and their editors.

Marvel, for many years, has not had any book in their line that served a similar purpose. They preferred to let writers and artists take a crack at five-page stories involving already-existing characters. Many of those stories saw print in the back of reprint titles or were dumped into the back of Treasury Editions. So new talent had to turn to the DC mystery titles to learn how to pace a story, develop characters and plots, write dialogue and create an atmosphere. Now most of those titles are gone.

The two remaining titles of this kind, *House of Mystery* and *Weird War Tales,* are more likely to use already-established talents for new material and to draw upon the large amount of inventory material the cancelled titles will leave behind for the rest of their stories.

Would-be creators are left with an even tougher task than they faced before. How can they get their foot through the door now? If the major publishers don't provide outlets for their talents, where can they turn?

The alternative markets and the underground comix seem to be the most promising channels. If people want to eventually write or draw Spider-Man, then the undergrounds are not the best place to learn the standard comic book style. On the other hand, if they really want to explore what can be done with the printed page, then the undergrounds offer unlimited opportunities. We refer people to Underground Station on page 13 where they can find addresses to submit materials to.

As for the alternative press magazines, they are the best place currently to do superhero, war, western or romance stories. Magazines such as *Eclipse* (which we profile on page 48) or the *Justice Machine* or new titles like *Nexus,* prove that new talents can learn how it's done. The major drawback with the alternatives is that newcomers are missing out on working with an experienced and professional editor. One reason the names mentioned earlier moved on to bigger and better things is that they worked with people like Orlando, Giordano and Julie Schwartz. Look at any of the interviews these people have given to the comic fanzines; almost always they credit one of these three editors with helping them learn how to produce the best comic stories possible.

Now it's going to be even more difficult for newcomers to get a start; some people within the comics say a higher calibre of talent will be required to get through the door. The only encouraging sign is Dick Giordano's commitment to look for new talent and help them develop. His proposed workshop system will allow people to produce stories that will never see the light of day but will give people the practical experience essential to the development of talent. It's a small start but he is finally in a position, as managing editor, to help breed that next generation—a generation we are all anxiously awaiting, a generation that will determine what kind of comics we will be reading in the future.

We, the readers and fans, must concern ourselves with looking to the future and making sure the companies prepare themselves for that future by helping to train new talent.

—Robert Greenberger

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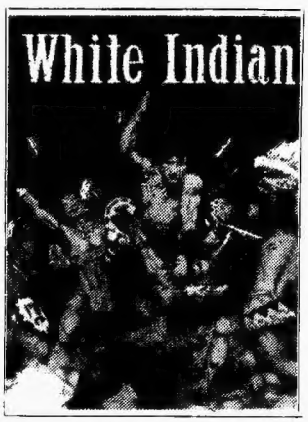

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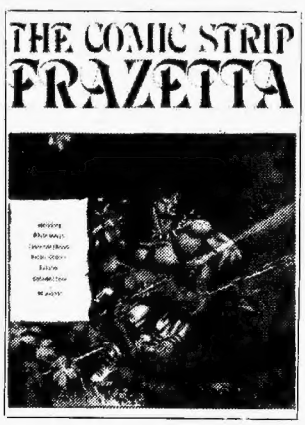

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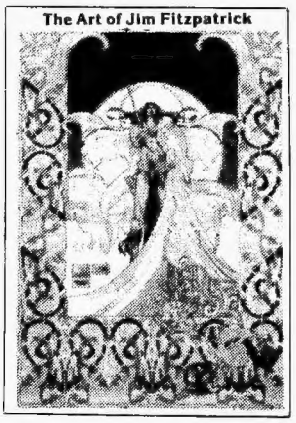

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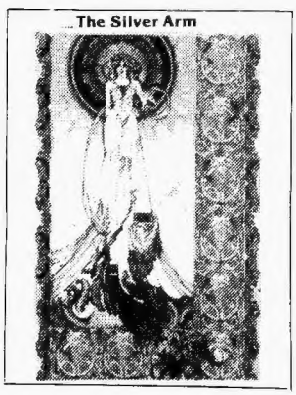

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Shooter Corrections

Dear Bob:

. . . Thanks for the copy of COMICS SCENE. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

I *would* like to point out a few errors in your article "Marvel Turns 20".

First, Jack Kirby's understanding of Marvel's policies and ways of doing business with creative people is totally wrong. Jack is a great man, whom I admire very much, but he's completely out of touch. His view of Marvel, I believe, is 10 years behind the times. I hope your upcoming interview with Jim Starlin and me clarifies Marvel's position.

Howard the Duck was *never* "immensely popular." At best, it was marginal.

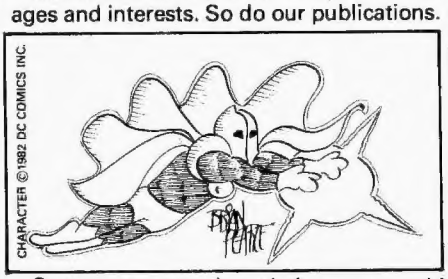
The new copyright laws which went into effect in 1978 did not create the work-made-for-hire-status, which had existed before. The new law merely required an agreement in writing between employee and employer in work-made-for-hire situations. Virtually everyone in comics had *always* worked on a work-for-hire basis. The new copyright law changed nothing regarding creators' rights, or Marvel's business relationship with its creative people.

Retaining copyright to his work is no guarantee that a creator will get rich, or even be able to pay the rent. There is no magic to retaining copyright which generates income. There is the *potential* for additional income for a creator retaining copyright to his work, but it depends upon his selling the work again and again. It is true that we ask creators working on regular Marvel-owned characters to do so without claim of copyright and without *some* of the potential of additional income from the work they do, but, in effect, we *buy* that copyright and that potential from them. We pay *very* well and provide a variety of benefits in exchange for creators' services. What it amounts to is a choice. Guaranteed money and benefits up front, or possibilities of income down the road. Many creative people work both on regular Marvel characters, *and* on projects which they can retain copyright at Marvel and elsewhere.

The number of professionals leaving Marvel hasn't been "staggering." I count *four* well-known creative people who have left since I've been in charge: Thomas, Wolfman, Perez (on very friendly terms, by the way) and Colan. And, I'd like to mention a few more names of folks who have left DC for Marvel since I've been here: Frank Miller, Terry Austin, Bob Wiacek, Larry Hama, Al Milgrom, Steve Mitchell, Jack Abel and more. It seems to me the trend is for top creators to move *to* Marvel.

Stan becoming publisher did not make way for Galton to become president. Galton succeeded Al Landau as president. Stan was president and publisher for a short while before Al Landau became president, a backbreaking dual role Stan was delighted to get rid of.

Marvel's readers cover a spectrum of ages and interests. So do our publications.



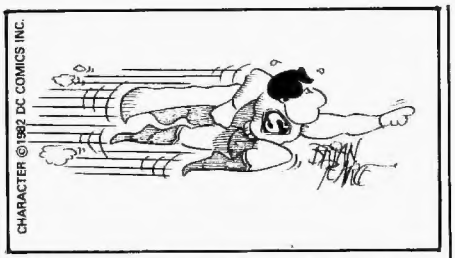
Superman, to my knowledge, *never* sold anywhere near 2,000,000 copies per month. Currently, Spider-Man sells more than twice as many copies as Superman per month.

Marvel was, in fact, largely responsible for the birth and growth of the direct market.

It was Mike Friedrich's original suggestion that three titles be sold exclusively direct. While the three titles we chose were not our top sellers, all *were* selling acceptably.

The direct market is, indeed, "more forgiving" than the newsstand market in that fans will buy a comic book for the art even if the writing is weak, or vice versa, whereas, newsstand buyers generally won't buy a comic if either the art or the writing is weak. Naturally, we want to make comics that are excellent in every way, so they'll do well in both markets.

Our company is definitely *not* paying "less attention" to the publishing of comics.



That's about it. Again, thanks for the enjoyable magazine, and good luck with it.

Jim Shooter

First Issue Comments

Dear Bob:

. . . Thanks for the advance look at COMICS SCENE. Quite frankly, it's a heckuva lot better than I had hoped for. You seem to have an excellent grasp of what you want to do, and you've got a good, solid format on which you can build. The visual appearance of the magazine is also a definite plus.

As you grow, and I have no doubts that you will, I'm certain that you'll constantly refine your approach. I'd like to see more in-depth commentary, more reader-service articles—a place where readers can ask questions and get answers from the people they want answers from. More coverage of why things are happening rather than simply reporting that they are happening. For instance, you report that Marvel is doing several more toy-tie-ins. Why? Why concentrate on that rather than new characters? What is their philosophy? Rather than simply report on, say, the new book Gene Colan and I are doing for DC . . . *Challengers,* go into more in-depth coverage . . . what goes on in the creation of a new comic, etc. Most of the magazines simply report the news. You can do more.

However, considering this is your first issue, and already you seem to be producing a better magazine than the other fan-oriented comics' publications, you undoubtedly realize that growth potential yourself.

Your article on Marvel's 20th anniversary was remarkably fair yet not fawning. One correction, though. You say that many veteran professionals, myself included, have openly criticized Marvel of late. Not really true. From the moment I told Jim Shooter I was leaving Marvel and moving to DC, I've been scrupulous about saying anything concerned with Marvel to the Press. Indeed, when asked by both The Comics Journal and The New York Times why I quit, I replied to both—personal reasons. I have no real gripe against Marvel. Indeed, my first six out of eight years at the com-

(Continued on page 24)

Comics Reporter

DC Rocks Industry with Royalty Program

Recognizing a change in the comic book business, DC announced on November 17 a royalty payment program for the regular newsstand comics. Immediate industry reaction was positive: creators say this legitimizes the entire business.

The program involves paying four percent of the cover price to the writer, penciller and inker for comics selling in excess of 100,000 copies in the United States and Canada. People creating comics since July, 1981 will receive a one percent royalty in addition to the standard royalty.

Paul Levitz, manager of business affairs for DC, told COMICS SCENE, "As our business has grown, we have seen a clearer and clearer correspondence between the efforts of our creative people and the sales of the comics. We feel it is stronger in our interests and in the freelancers' interests, therefore, to make their compensation based upon the sales of the work to motivate them to do things that will make the comics sell better."

Thr program is being made retroactive to last July when all DC comics went from 50¢ to 60¢. This was done as a psychological move, Levitz claimed. "Comic books operate on such long lead times—if I started under the royalty plan and wrote a story today (November), that story wouldn't be published until May of 1982 and I wouldn't get a check until May of 1983. Any plan under a system like that is going to take a long time before people are really going to feel excited about it. We chose to backdate the system to be able to make payments fairly soon. We chose to start it with the 60¢ books because that's when our economics could afford it."

While the writers and artists can profit, the readers will be losing out on two pages of story an issue. After Marvel went to 60¢ for 22 pages of story, DC cut back its editorial content to 25 pages and now to compensate for the royalty plan, they will have 23 pages of story. Editors will determine if the lead features or back-ups will lose pages.

Levitz felt the readers will benefit from better quality work in exchange for shorter stories. "We've seen in the four days the plan has been in effect that some of the writers and artists who have previously never tried to get together for plot conferences are coming in to work on them, getting more intensely involved in the books," he observed.

The system works as follows:

Once comic goes off sale, several months pass by before the final sales figures are known. After the information comes in, if the sales exceed 100,000 copies, the number of sales above 100,000 is multiplied by the cover price. For example, if the *New Teen Titans* sold 217,000 copies one month, 117,000 copies are multiplied by 60¢ for a total of $70,200. Since that book was created before the royalty program, Marv Wolfman, George Perez and Romeo Tanghal split four percent of $2,808 and did not receive the one percent creator's royalty.

Wolfman would receive 50% of that figure while Perez and Tanghal get 25% each since layout artists and embellishers get an even split. In the case of a penciller and inker, such as Curt Swan and Frank Chiaramonte on *Superman,* the split would be 35% and 15% respectively.

If there are back-up series, the royalties are divided up so that 75% goes to the team on the lead feature and 30% goes to the creators of the back-up strip. Anthology books such as *Superman Family* or *House of Mystery* have the royalties split according to the percentage of the total page count each story runs.

Levitz admitted that in a given month, about half the DC titles fail to sell in excess of 100,000 but he feels with the incentive of royalties, the quality of the entire line will improve, and in due time, all the books should be able to produce royalties.

In any given situation, he pointed out, there may be jockeying among the creators for a position on a top selling book. "Once you change how people are being paid and why people are being paid, you change what they want to do to some degree," Levitz said.

The plan came to mind in late September and was put together rather quickly. Levitz said the idea was far from an original one since just about every other form of publishing has some kind of royalty system but now the economics finally made it feasible in the comic book industry.

The response at Marvel Comics was quick. Editor-in-chief Jim Shooter said he would like to offer royalties to his creators, something he has thought of doing for some time, but must go through channels at both Marvel and, its owner, Cadence Industries. "We don't think we can match them; we think we can beat them," Shooter told us.

Shooter explained that when he became editor-in-chief at Marvel four years ago, he wanted to introduce royalties. What prevented him were several concerns about administrating the plan and the headaches of matching artists and writers with top selling books.

The royalty program indicates an improvement in the life of freelancers who can now work towards making more money while also improving the quality of their books. Fans may expect better stories in the long-run while the companies combat rising costs that have already made the standard 32-page comic almost obsolete.

One comic professional commented that this may spell the end to many small press publishers, such as New Media Publishing or Pacific Comics, who will no longer be able to woo away many of the top talents to work for them. "It's a shame they will be the ones hurt by all this," he said.

DC COMICS

New Series Announced for Spring and Summer

DC Comics has announced three new series to premiere during the spring and summer, featuring the talents of such people as Marv Wolfman, Gene Colan, Len Wein, Ross Andru and Ernie Colon.

The first series, tentatively titled *Gem World,* was created by the writing team of Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn for editor Dave Manak. Ernie Colon is set to pencil and possibly ink this book, due to premiere in June. The concept involves a character on Earth who can retreat to a dimensional universe where various kingdoms are situated atop gems.

The following month sees the release of *Pandora Pann* boasting the combined talents of four editors. Created and written by Len Wein, the series is tentatively set to be drawn by Ross Andru (doing his first regular series in years) and Dick Giordano. Editor Karen Berger said the series involves an archeologist's daughter who opens Pandora's box and then must go out and try and contain the evil she unwittingly unleashed.

DONOVAN BROWN
PARAPSYCHOLOGIST. TEACHER. HUSBAND. FATHER.
HE HAS SEEN HIS FAMILY DI
WHAT NOW HAPPENS TO HIM NO LONGER MATTERS.
ART: ©1982 DC COMICS INC.

Also set for a spring release is *The Challengers,* created by Marv Wolfman. It is described as an horror/adventure story. Wolfman explained that the series is being structured like a succession of novels, each novel lasting six or seven issues. Unlike most series, you'll never know, from novel to novel, which characters will return, live or die.

The first story, he said, is being pencilled by Gene Colan for a special insert in the *Teen Titans.* This will set things up for the first novel involving the Baron, the only regular character as far as Wolfman is concerned. The Baron has a house in Georgetown and gets involved in a story that also draws in Jack Gold, a reporter, and Donovan Brown, a parapsychologist hired by the government to investigate devil-worshipping and the raising of the devil himself. Acting as the story's catalyst is Vannessa Van Helsing, descendent of Abraham Van Helsing of *Dracula* fame.

"We can actually try and do a slightly more adult storyline," Wolfman told us. "It would be a modern equivalent of the Stephen King novels."

Already announced and set for a spring release is *Camelot 3000,* a 12-issue maxi-series edited by Len Wein, written by Mike W. Barr and illustrated by Britain's Brian Bolland, one of the talents involved in Britain's Judge Dredd comic strip (see *Around the World).*

Also announced for June release is a revived *Adventure Comics.* Enough support was drummed up amongst the editors to reinstate the long-running title although it will start as a reprint digest, replacing *DC Special* on the schedule. Co-edited by Carl Gafford and Dick Giordano, the digest will feature reprints from *Adventure*'s long run as well as original material. Exactly what new stories will be done has not been determined but the editors are considering making the features a continuing series. The book will continue its numbering so that issue 500 will at long last appear in March 1983.

Finally, the only announced mini-series for 1982 is the *Teen Titans,* set for a spring-summer release for a four month period. See related story.

IT COST YOU A SON.
HE WAS BORN A DEMI-GOD.
HE WAS POWER ALMOST WITHOUT END.
HE GAVE HIS HEART TO DEATH.
HE DIED ATTEMPTING TO SATISFY THAT DARK UNREQUITED LOVE.
HE WAS THANOS OF TITAN.
HE DIED ENCASED IN STONE AS HARD AS HIS OWN HEART.
ART: ©1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Above is a page from Jim Starlin's graphic novel, *The Death of Captain Marvel.* The book, on sale this month, heralds the beginning of Marvel's much talked about graphic novel series and also ends the career of a character created in 1968. Editor-in-chief Jim Shooter plans on using the name Captain Marvel for a new superhero in the near future. For a peek at art from Starlin's second graphic novel, *Dreadstar,* and some news about Marvel's graphic novel contract, see page 18.

MARVEL COMICS

News Round-Up

*The oft-delayed story involving virtually every Marvel character will finally see print this spring as the *Mighty Marvel Contest of Heroes.* Originally written as a tie-in to the 1980 Olympics, the project was pulled when America did not send a team. The story by Bill Mantlo, John Romita, Jr. and Pablo Marcos will be a three-issue mini-series.

*Other mini-series are being produced by Marvel but some rescheduling has been required. *Wolverine* is being pushed back a month or two as Frank Miller busily pencils Chris Claremont's stories. The book should see print in a month or two. Bill Sienkiewicz was unavailable to do the *Scarlet Witch/Vision* mini-series and a search is on for a replacement. Bill Mantlo remains the writer. The only mini-series apparently on schedule is Bob Layton's *Hercules.*

*Lucasfilm Ltd. has verbally approved the concepts for the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* comic. Editor Jim Salicrup reports the book should be scheduled fairly soon and the team-up of John Byrne and Terry Austin has been confirmed.

*Up-coming series in *Epic Illustrated* include the Don McGregor/Craig Russell *Killraven,* another Chris Claremont/John Bolton *Marada* tale and several one-shot *Elric of Melinbourne* stories by Roy Thomas and Craig Russell. These stories will appear shortly after Thomas' graphic novel appears this spring. Claremont, Bolton, John Romita, Jr. and Berni Wrightson will all contribute work in the future.

*Jim Shooter announced that while other humor magazines are faltering in sales, *Crazy* has been on an upswing. Noting this, Marvel has also planned an all-humor issue of *What If?* which will include a story by Fred Hembeck.

*Finally, the *Marvel Roast,* announced for December, should be in release as you read this, Fred Hembeck reports that he is pleased to be doing the cover with Terry Austin.

ANIMATION

Swamp Thing, Hulk TV Bound

With the apparent success of *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends,* Marvel Productions will produce a new Saturday morning series featuring the *Hulk.* At the same time, Swampfilms Inc. and Hanna-Barbera announced plans to produce an animated series based on the *Swamp Thing* film. Both shows are due for fall premieres.

The *Spider-Man* show has, according to producer Dennis Marks, been doing very well in the ratings, achieving the top spot in its time period frequently. On November 21, the show was moved from its 11:30 a.m. spot to 10:30 to act as a stronger lead-in show to the faltering *Space Stars.*

Encouraged, NBC has just finished working out details with Marvel to do the *Hulk* series, based on the comic and not the CBS series. With Marvel producing the shows and Stan Lee's intimate involvement, there are hopes the Hulk will act in the series with the same animalistic fervor that he displays in his monthly comic.

Fans worried about the appearance of Swamp Wife, Swamp Kids and a Swamp Mobile can lay aside their fears.

Swamp Thing

Producer Mike Uslan announced that Swampfilms will retain creative control over the *Swamp Thing* series and that it will remain true to the movie and comic series. No network has picked up the series yet but production plans continue.

This is the time when animation houses propose new series to the networks and reports come from Marvel that Don Glut has drawn up a proposal for the *Guardians of the Galaxy* and artist Will Meunigot has worked up an *Iron Man* series that differs slightly from the comic book. There is still talk from DC about an animated series featuring the *Teen Titans* and *Dial H for Hero* but no announcements have been made. It is too early to tell which series will make it past the talking stages.

ALTERNATIVE PRESS

Pacific Update

Pacific Comics, the alternative press comic publisher which has lured such superstar talents as Jack Kirby and Neal Adams, continues to expand and diversify its line.

The Pacific Comics indexes supply thorough listings of all appearances by key superheroes, accompanied by complete presentations of covers for all the books in which the characters play a key role. On sale now are such Marvel reference works as the *X-Men Index* and the *Daredevil Index* (with a Frank Miller cover); in April the company will release a reprinted, updated version of their *Spider-Man Index*. DC will also be represented for the first time with three or four indexes a year. The opening book will cover the *Teen Titans* and will be followed in March by the *Justice League of America*.

For the fan who is more interested in current four-color comics, Pacific offers some interesting developments. The company's latest addition to its gallery of superheroes is "The Rocketeer" by Dave Stevens which appears as a backup feature in *Starslayer #2*. The hero is a stunt pilot in Los Angeles of the 1930s who battles wrongdoers with the help of a rocket pack, much in the same manner as the old serials-hero Commando Cody. The success of the character will clearly depend upon the considerable talents of Stevens who, until now, has enjoyed only a local reputation on the west coast. Primarily he has worked in the animation field, contributing to Ruby-Spears, Hanna-Barbera and Japanese shows. Pacific co-publisher Steve Schanes believes Stevens will make a big impression on the comic book market. "The only problem with Dave Stevens," says Schanes, "is that he is such a perfectionist. He will spend three or four days on a page, so he's going to starve himself to death being a comic book artist for the big companies. But he will also turn out the finest material being turned out."

Until now, the only comic book Stevens has worked on is an issue of *Master of Kung Fu* published several years ago. According to Schanes, "the book came out very terribly and Stevens was really turned off by comics. So we got him back. We work our company a lot differently than Marvel and DC. We give a lot more leeway but we expect a lot better work—and we're getting that. So he's not under the time pressure that he would be under at Marvel or DC. His work is just incredible."

"The Rocketeer" will run as a backup in *Starslayer* for two issues. If the response is good, then the rocket-packed hero may get his own title, possibly as a one-shot. Neal Adams' *Ms. Mystic*, who originally appeared in *Captain Victory* #3, will begin her run under her own title probably sometime in March. Other Pacific four-color books should follow. According to Schanes, three more titles will appear next year and he promises they will involve a couple of more big names.

Rocketeer

ART: ©1982 PACIFIC COMICS

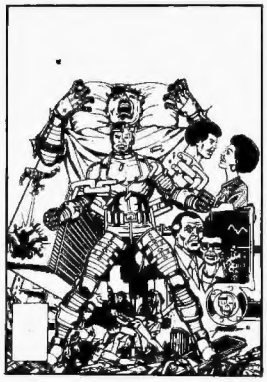
DC COMICS

Titans Mini-Series and Annual Planned

Marv Wolfman, the busy writer for the *New Teen Titans*, spoke with us briefly about the upcoming onslaught of *Titans* appearances. Beginning in March, a four issue mini-series will be released. In order, the issues will feature Cyborg, Raven, Changling and Starfire with each character relating an event that happened to them prior to their joining the Teen Titans.

"There is a common link with the stories involving friendship. I just have them talk on a camping trip," Wolfman explains. George Perez is pencilling the four issues but a different inker will handle each story. No announcement has been made on the selections.

As you read this, a storyline has begun, involving the Titans going to Starfire's home planet for an all-out action-filled science fiction tale that serves to explore Starfire's past and show readers her culture. That storyline will wrap up in *Teen Titans Annual #1*, on sale in May and kicking off DC's revived annual series. If all plans hold up, George Perez will be pencilling and inking the 40-page story. "It's going to be a real powerful story," Wolfman promises.



ART: ©1982 DC COMICS INC.

Cyborg

The announced crossover team-ups that involve the Titans appearing with Batman in *Brave and Bold*, Superman and Batman in *World's Finest* and Superman in *DC Comics Presents* have been pushed back on the schedule for a fall or winter appearance. This is being done to avoid a massive Titans saturation.

Wolfman and editor Len Wein are carefully controlling the Titans' appearances to avoid making the readers tired. "We're not going to oversaturate it by putting them in a 100 different books to improve sales like Marvel does with the *X-Men*," he warns.

However, both companies are planning the *X-Men/Teen Titans* crossover special for late summer. Produced by Marvel, it is being written by Chris Claremont with art by Walt Simonson.

And by the time you read this, a Titans novel may be in the works. DC has been negotiating with Tor Books for a series of paperback comic reprints and original novels. The first novel will be released in March and is Wein's adaptation of the *Swamp Thing* film. Wolfman and the Titans are planned for the second novel.

IN MEMORIUM

Frederic Wertham 1895-1981

Long a foe of comics, television, radio and movies, Dr. Frederic Wertham campaigned to make citizens aware of the dangers lurking in "harmless" entertainment for the young. The campaign came to an end November 18, 1981, when he died at the age of 86.

To the Munich, Germany-born psychiatrist, these forms of entertainment inspired children to commit crimes, become homosexuals and develop anti-social habits detrimental to the community as a whole. During the late 1940s, Wertham researched his beliefs and produced the book *Seduction of the Innocent* "unmasking" the morally corrupt comic book industry. For example, he maintained that scenes of Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson sleeping in the same room would arouse homosexual desires in impressionable youths. His campaigning led the Senate to convene a series of highly-publicized hearings.

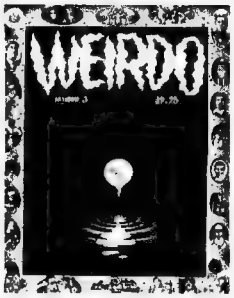
As a result of the hearings, the comic industry, which at the time relied mainly on horror and crime comics, many with lurid and gory covers, decided to institute a form of self-regulation. The Comic Magazine Association of America was formed and a comics code introduced. This act led the vast majority of publishers to close down their operations and forced William M. Gaines to fold the celebrated EC line of comics. Some of the comics cited in his work have since gone on to command high prices in the collector's market.

Wertham returned to comment on the comic fandom phenomena with a book in 1974 about fanzines. It noticeably lacked his sharp criticism of 25 years earlier.

The noted psychiatrist also directed a clinic that is credited as being the first in the United States to have criminals receive psychiatric examinations for the courts.

He is survived by his wife, sculptor Florence Hesketh.

Required Reading



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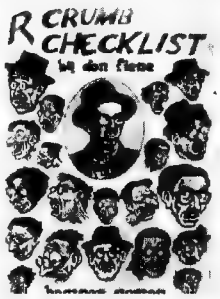

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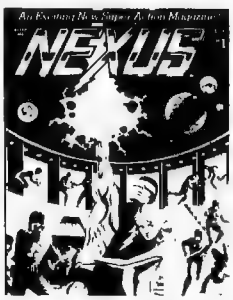

NEXUS #1
First issue! Color cover by Paul Gulacy, interior art by Mike Baron and Steve Rude.
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ZIPPY #3 "ZIPPY FOR PRESIDENT!"
By Bill Griffith
$2.25

KID'S LIBERATION
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75¢

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$2.00

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X-Men 150		.75
X-Men Annual 4		3.00
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X-Men Index		5.95
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IN MEMORIUM

Wally Wood: 1927-1981

Wallace Allan Wood—"Woody" to his friends—was born on June 17, 1927 in Menahga, Minnesota to Max and Alma Wood.

Menahga is a small, sleepy backwoods community located on the Crow Wing River in central Minnesota. In the heart of the great forests, surrounded by the cloud-scratching pines and firs, Max Wood made his living as a lumberjack. He had always been an outdoorsman and found it difficult to understand why his youngest son preferred to "scribble" on note paper in a corner instead of camping and fishing like his brother Glenn. It was during these early years Woody "scribbled" his *flying boat,* the *bone house* and the *dragon riders* which he was later to use in his epic fantasies.

At 17, Woody, full of patriotic fervor but too young to enlist in the Marines, joined the Merchant Marines in order to enter the action of World War II. Aboard a floating gas tanker, the task of his ship was to refuel fighting ships at sea. But Woody wanted to do more, and in 1947 he joined the 82nd Airborne Paratroopers and was stationed in Hokkaido, Japan. With his sketchbook stuffed in his back pocket, he was always ready to draw everything he saw, including the interior of a C-47 Troop Transport. These drawings became the basis for the gritty realism of his minutely detailed space ship interiors. One needed very little imagination to experience the claustrophobic life of a space pilot on a journey to a distant star when Woody drew the ships.

After his hitch in the troopers was over, Woody decided to polish his drawing style and, with this in mind, he entered the Minneapolis School of Fine Arts. Dissatisfied with how little he learned there, he decided to travel to the mecca of comic book art, New York City, where he entered the Hogarth School of Visual Arts. Burning with the desire to see his work in print, he supported himself at various odd jobs while he continued his studies. While still in art school he brought his portfolio to *Spirit* creator Will Eisner and was hired as Eisner's assistant on the *Spirit* strip. There he met another young cartoonist, Jules Feiffer and they soon became fast friends.

After his stint at Eisner's, Woody opened his own studio at 64th Street and Columbus Avenue where he shared the rent with other budding artists: Sid Check, Joe Orlando and Harry Harrison.

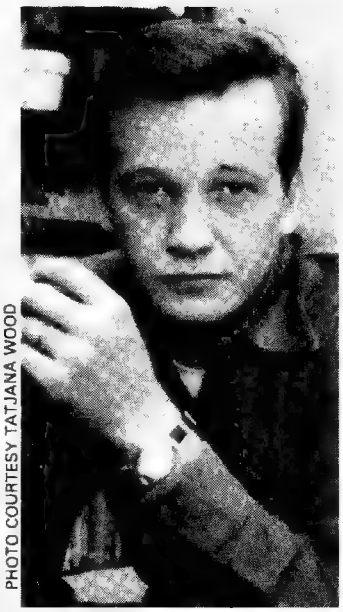


PHOTO COURTESY TATJANA WOOD

Wally Wood at age 25.

One of the few times he was away from his drawing board, he attended Saturday Night Folk Dances at a Quaker's Social Club and there he met a lovely young girl with the exotic name of Tatjana. Tatjana had been born in Germany of a Jewish father and was sent to Holland by her parents during the Nazi takeover. She had emigrated to America and, like Woody, she shared a love for folk music. On August 28, 1950, they were married, and eventually she joined the studio as a working member.

Unfortunately the studio was soon to end because a comic book publisher bankrupted, owing Woody and Joe Orlando several thousand dollars. Orlando left comics in disgust, but when Woody opened up a new studio in Rego Park, he called Orlando and convinced him to return to the work they both loved best, comic book art.

Because Orlando came from a fine arts background, he believed all drawing should be original, but Woody taught him that no one is truly original. Woody not only believed that it was all right to use the styles and techniques of other artists but also that it was a terrible waste not to. Woody could take a Hal Foster outdoor scene and turn it into the surface of a planet in Alpha Centuri. He had put quality into comic book art and showed Orlando that he could still make it pay.

For a while Woody and Orlando did a series of books, one of them called, "Earthman on Venus," for Avon Comics. Then they heard about a new company, EC Comics, headed by Bill Gaines. Here Woody hit his stride and produced some of the finest art of his career. At 25 he had become one of the most admired and copied artists in the field. When EC editor, Harvey Kurtzman, created *Mad Magazine,* Woody became one of *Mad's* major artists and remained with them for over a decade.

But *Mad Magazine* wasn't truly comics and eventually Woody had to return to his first love. He worked for Tower Comics where he created and illustrated such comic heroes as *Dynamo* and *Noman.* He also did fine black and white stories for Warren Publications where he was able to use every graytone technique at his command and he even did work for Ralph Bakshi of Krantz Animation Studio.

His marriage to Tatjana, however, was faltering and soon ended in divorce. In 1969, Woody met Marylin Silver and they were married.

He moved to Long Island where he opened another studio in Valley Stream and began working on two adventure strips for the *Overseas Weekly* newspaper, "Salley Forth" and "Cannon." It was at this studio that he did his preliminary sketches for his masterpiece *The Wizard King.* A few years later he published *Wizard* in book form and started work on volume two which was called Okin, Son of Odkin.

His marriage to Marylin was short lived and it was not long before they were divorced. Through friends, Woody met Muriel Van Swaringen who became the third and final Mrs. Wood.

By now poor health was beginning to take its toll on Woody. High blood pressure caused him to lose sight in one eye, ruining his depth perception, and a failing kidney made him weak and unsteady. This showed clearly in his art. *Odkin* fell far short of Woody's usual high standards.

Once again Woody moved. This time he traveled to Van Nuys, California in hopes his *Wizard King* might be translated to animated films. This was never to be. On November 2, 1981, "The Wizard King," Wallace Allan Wood, despondent perhaps over his rapidly failing health, took his own life.

It is fitting that his product of 30 years, his art, should be his tribute. It is also fitting that artists who have worked with him and those who have never even met him should be influenced by this giant of the comic art industry.

—Nicola Cuti

Woody's Eulogy

Wednesday, November 18, 1981 saw an impressive gathering of professionals who knew and respected Wally Wood. A memorial service was convened at the Warner Communications building, home of DC Comics. The collection of artists, writers and editors included people like William M. Gaines, publisher of Mad Magazine. *Many people from Marvel, DC, Warren and independent publishing had things to say about Wood, but it fell to longtime friend Joe Orlando, currently vice-president-editorial director at DC, to say the eulogy. Here is a transcript:*

We are all here today because we have a common bond. At sometime our lives were touched by an artist called Wallace Wood.

We all know what a wonderfully creative artist Wally was. We all can attest to his ability to delight us with his visions. We sat back in awe at the power of his compositions.

From the claustrophobic interior of a spacecraft, to a flower struggling to survive on a dark forest floor, Wally's attention to detail and his ability to show us the beauty of things both great and small was graphic magic. That was the public Wally.

I also knew the private Wally, a kind and generous human being. A young man with the innocent vision of youth. He was a Minnesota country boy with a thirst for knowledge, and a seeker of answers to the profound mysteries of life and art.

When he learned some truth, he passed it on because it was too valuable to withhold from his friends.

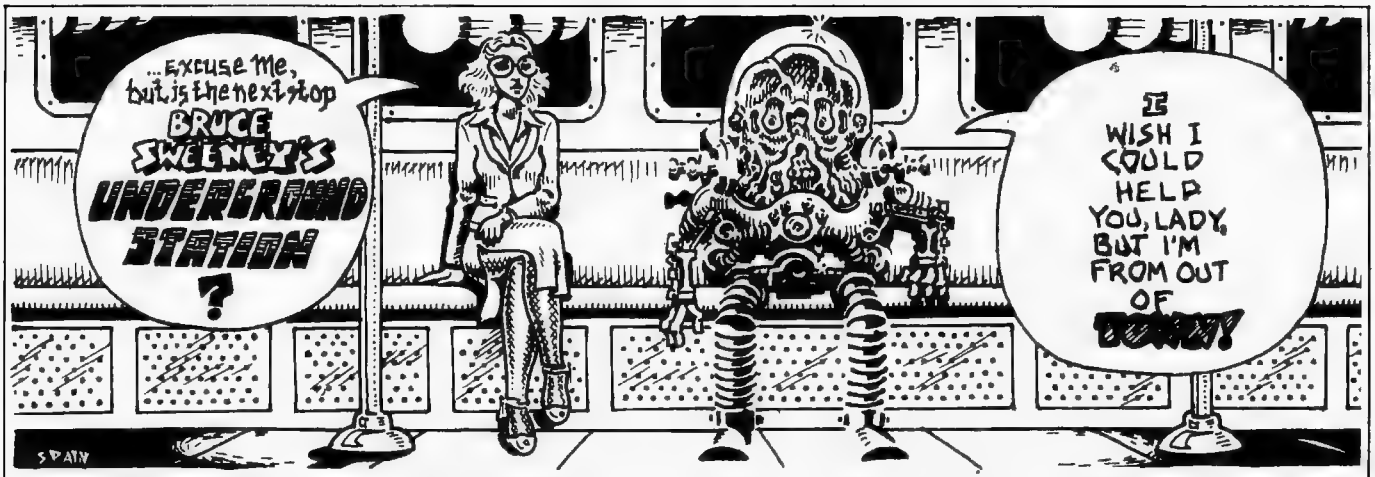
It was this man-child that I knew and grew to love.

It was this young captain that set me on a life course that I would follow to this day.

Now I stand here wishing that I had been able to persuade this friend, to believe all of the wonderful things that he was.

If he had only believed in himself the way we all believed in him . . . he might still be with us today.

So . . . even though you won't believe this, Wally . . . We'll miss you.


...Excuse me, but is the next stop BRUCE SWEENEY'S UNDERGROUND STATION ?
I WISH I COULD HELP YOU, LADY, BUT I'M FROM OUT OF TOWN!
SPAIN

KITCHEN SINK
2 Swamp Rd;
Pinceton, Wi. 54968

Mod #1 is now out, edited by Terry Beatty with material by newcomers Kato, Wray and Borden as well as Hunt Emerson and 4 pages by Bill Griffith.

The 2d issue of *Gay Comix* contains work by Jennifer Camper, Burton Clarke, editor Howard Cruse, Roberta Gregory, Melissa Bay Mathis, Lee Marrs, Joe Sinardi, Robert Triptow and Mary Wings. Cruse, Gregory, Marrs and Wings made previous appearances in *Gay Comix* #1, also published by Kitchen Sink.

"The purpose of *Gay Comix* is to provide a space for gay comic artists to draw about their own experiences, feelings, and observations. Lesbians and gay males have been largely ignored or, when depicted, shown as clowns, villains, stereotypes or freaks in both the overground and underground comic book media. Exceptions have been solo books produced by Mary Wings *(Come Out Comics* and *Dyke Shorts)* and Roberta Gregory *(Dynamite Damsels),* and scattered short pieces such as those by Howard Cruse. The first all-gay oriented u.g. was *Gay Heartthrobs,* a Last Gasp title," according to Cruse.

The first issue of *Gay Comix* was widely and, on the whole, favorably reviewed in both the fan and gay press, and is presently going into a 2d printing.

RIP-OFF PRESS
P.O. Box 14158,
S.F., Ca. 94114

The *Cartoon History of the Universe #6* by Larry Gonick is out and so is *Rip-Off Comix #9* featuring the Frank Bros. forming a punk-rock band, material by Dave Sheridan and some great u.g. cartooning by French artists. The book has a $1.50 cover price and also has a Wonder Warthog story.

EDUCOMICS
Box 40246, S.F., Ca. 40246

Educomics has released Nakazawa's *Gen of Hiroshima #2* with a $2 cover price.

RAW BOOKS
27 Greene St.,
N.Y.C., N.Y. 10013

Raw #3 is out for $4 plus $1.50 postage. It has 48 pages and features "Joe's Bar," a 20-page story by Munoz and Sampayo; "Jimbo's Running Sore" by Gary Panter; "Girl Can't Help It," a 1-pager by Meulen & Flippen; "Dog Boy" a 1-pager by Charles Burns and chapter two of "Maus—A Survivor's Tale."

LAST GASP
2180 Bryant St.,
S.F., Ca. 94110

Gay Heartthrobs #3 is out, edited by Larry Fuller and retails for $2.

American Splendor #6 features Harvey Pekar, Gary Dumm, Gerry Shamray, Greg Budgett, and Michael Gilbert and retails for $2.25.

X-Capees came out in December and is a photojournal book devoted to the Bay area punk scene. British artists are at work in England on *Knockabout Comics #3* and Bryan Talbot, Graham Manley and Cliff Harper are all working on assignments in Great Britain for *Slow Death #11,* as are Frank Brunner, Vincent Bode and Ted Sturgeon, American sci-fi writer. The Sinsimelia Cultivators 1982 Calendar is also available from Lasp Gasp. ■

Corrections

What's a first issue without a few mistakes. We want to apologize up front for the numerous typos that crept up during the production of issue number one. Hopefully, there won't be any this time around.

Some of the more major mistakes from the first issue include:

In the *Heavy Metal* article, the average age of the readers ranged from 18-39, not 10-39. Also, the preview we mentioned did not involve Leonard Dime Dillon but Leo and Diane Dillon.

Superman or *Action* never sold better than one and a half million copies per month; not two million, as was stated in our cover story.

Our news item on the *Muppet* comic strip inaccurately identified Mort Walker as the creator of *Hagar the Horrible. Hagar* is the creation of Dik Browne.

The underground notes spelled Michael Roden's name incorrectly. The latter is the proper spelling.

And finally, our biggest mistake was caught by none other than author Ron Goulart. The large panel reproduction credited to Noel Sickles in the *Scorchy Smith* story was really the work of Russell Keaton from the *Sky Roads* strip.

Maybe we should start giving out No Prizes.

Art ©1981 Dale Lee Coovert for the Dale Lee Planet.

Artwork by Robert Williams from *The Dale Lee Planet Dinosaur Portfolio,* a collection of prehistoric representations, currently on sale.

Joe Sinnott

A revealing look at an artist who has helped shape the look of Marvel Comics

By SAM MARONIE

This year Joe Sinnott celebrates his 33rd year as a comic-book illustrator. For most of this time the versatile inker-artist has been regarded as the absolute tops in his field by fans and pros alike. Sinnott's slick professional inks add sophistication and beauty to both the greenest newcomer and the most seasoned veteran.

The man is a living history of Marvel Comics. He toiled for the giant corporation when it was operating as a seat-of-the-pants outfit in the early '50s, and later, as penciller and inker, Sinnott helped usher in the "Marvel Age" during the mid-'60s on such key strips as *Thor* and *The Fantastic Four*. This first-rate creative talent has labored quietly and unceremoniously for over three decades. Sinnott remains content giving 100% to whatever job is at hand; he's not looking for fame or publicity—he feels his work speaks for itself. Taking time off from his work at his studio in Saugerties, New York, Sinnott spoke with COMICS SCENE about his start in the comics field.

Sinnott had spent three years in the service during World War II and then passed some time taking odd jobs in his hometown before he finally decided to pursue a career that would take advantage of his artistic abilities. An admirer of such great comic strip artists as Milton Caniff, Alex Raymond and Hal Foster, Sinnott had dabbled in the field himself on an amateur level in high school when he had worked on the school newspaper and yearbook.

PHOTO: SAM MARONIE

"It seemed like I had been drawing all my life," he recalled. "So I made up my mind to enroll in the Cartoonists and Illustrators School in New York City. At that time—around 1949—they offered a three-year program with nine-month semesters.

"One of the instructors there, Tom Gill, was actively drawing for Dell, Fawcett and Timely Comics—which later became Marvel. He had one or two other students from school who were working with him on these jobs at his home on Long Island. Gill seemed to like my style, and eventually asked if I'd be interested in joining their group on Saturdays."

Sinnott agreed enthusiastically. For months afterwards the draftsmen convened on Gill's spacious sun porch, passing the pages along assembly-line fashion with each artist contributing his share of the workload. While the apprentices would pencil and ink backgrounds and human figures, Gill added the characters' faces. The ersatz comic shop toiled on a steady stream of western tales, mystery chillers, and virtually every other kind of comic.

"Besides the tremendous experience of working in professional comics, Gill paid us all fairly well—and you couldn't beat that back in those days! I know it's hard to believe today, but I was eking along on the GI Bill and subsisting on 35 to 50 cents a day for food. With places like the Automat and Nibble & Nab for a Nickel, you could get along pretty well."

Working in the round-robin operation with Gill and his assistants was exciting for a time, but Sinnott yearned to break out on his own. He desired to turn out complete pencils in his own individual style.

"I trekked over to Timely Comics on St. Patrick's Day, March, 1951," Sinnott recalled. "That's when I got my first script from Stan Lee. He knew I had been working with Tom Gill on some of the Timely books like *Kent Blake*

THE TOWERING FIGURE OF GALACTUS IS TRANSFORMED INTO A LIVING, RAGING FURY OF PURE POWER... AS THE VERY ATOMS IN THE AIR SEEM TO CRACKLE IN ELEMENTAL DISARRAY...!
THE GAME IS ENDED! THE PRIZE HAS ELUDED ME! AND AT LAST I PERCEIVE THE GLINT OF GLORY WITHIN THE RACE OF MAN! BE EVER WORTHY OF THAT GLORY, HUMANS... BE EVER MINDFUL OF YOUR PROMISE OF GREATNESS!
...FOR IT SHALL ONE DAY LIFT YO BEYOND THE STAR OR BURY YOU WITH THE RUINS OF WA THE CHOICE IS YOURS!!
ART: ©1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP
HE'S BEGINNING TO GLOW... TO VIBRATE... LIKE SOME ETHEREAL TITAN!
GET BACK... ALL OF YOU! THIS SIGHT WAS NEVER MEANT FOR HUMAN EYES!
CAN'T YOU EVER GIT STRUCK SPEECHLESS, LIKE THE REST OF US?!!

Left: artwork pencilled *and* inked by Sinnott. Right: Jack Kirby's Galactus inked by Sinnott.

and *The Apache Kid.*

"Now, I really didn't *see* Stan at that time. There was a little anteroom outside his office where the artists waited to see him. Bob Brown came out and took my samples in to Stan, who thought they were OK and gave me a filler script for *Kent Blake* called 'China;' that was the first thing I did for them on my own. But in those days almost anyone could get work from Timely, because they published so many books.

"After I did this two-page story I was 'in,' and dealt directly with Stan. I'd go in and he'd look over the art, rarely asking for any changes; then he'd give you another script. There were always so many people waiting to see him like Russ Heath, Bob Powell and Gene Colan—who was just a kid then.

"Timely was located at 60 Park Avenue and Stan's office was just a little cubbyhole—they were really running things on a shoestring. What I remember most vividly is that he was always typing on these long yellow legal sheets, always working on the next story."

1957 proved an eventful year for the illustrator. Timely, along with virtually every other publisher, suspended operations for several months. They had accumulated a tremendous backlog of material and, more importantly, the new Comics Code had finished off the industry's biggest sellers: horror comics. The other books were not selling at all.

Sinnott managed to grab a story assignment here and there from Dell, Classics Illustrated or whatever company was buying a rare piece of new work. During this period Sinnott also began pencilling for a new comic, *Treasure Chest,* which was sold through subscription to Catholic grade schools across the country. He joined Reed Crandall as contributor to this publication, a very pleasant association which lasted many years.

When the companies geared back up for production Sinnott began "scratching out more comics." There were six-page Timely (now Atlas) masterpieces, one-shot volumes for publishers like Dell about J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, along with assorted other work.

"There was such a variety back in the old days," he explained. "You'd show up every Friday for a new script; it might be a Western, science-fiction, detective—you never knew what to expect. And when you finished you had the pencils *and* the inks—in other words it was a complete job except for the lettering.

"Today, you get a 22-page script and it's been laid out or pencilled by someone else; the pages are all mixed up so you never really know what the story's all about. It's hard to determine if a character should be laughing or frowning in one panel to the next. I really don't enjoy it as compared to 30 years ago."

Throughout the rest of the fifties Joe continued pushing his pencil. While the types of stories varied, the plots and characters remained interchangeable. But one day in 1961 Stan Lee decided to try something off the wall and created a group of super heroes who bickered among themselves and seemed more like real people. When *Fantastic Four* #1 hit the newsstands with a bang, no one—especially Joe Sinnott—knew what had happened. The Marvel Age of Comics had arrived, and Sinnott contributed much to the movements success. Aside from pencilling short fantasy stories for books like *Tales of Suspense* and *Tales to Astonish*, Sinnott was employed by Lee to bolster other successes. Sinnott pencilled several early *Thor* adventures in *Journey into Mystery* and inked Kirby for a keynote *Fantastic Four*, issue #5, which featured the very first appearance of Dr. Doom.

Lee drew heavily on his stable of artists from the Atlas days, utilizing people like Don Heck, Gene Colan and Dick Ayers, but Sinnott was persuaded to put down the pencil for an ink brush. He continued to have a hand in almost every Marvel feature published

at the time, but eventually, in the mid-60's, concentrated on *Fantastic Four,* for which he and Kirby respectively inked and pencilled the book for several years, until Kirby left Marvel in 1970.

It was a sad day when Sinnott's working relationship with Jack Kirby came to an abrupt end. "I really missed—and still miss—working on Jack's pages; his pencils were always so tight and complete . . . just beautiful to ink.

"I hate to sound so syrupy sweet, but nobody could or can do comics anything like Jack. All those years we spent working together were never boring, because he made it interesting and fun. Every month I looked forward to receiving that package of art from him and seeing those fantastic pages. I miss working with him and now I especially miss the *Fantastic Four.* They were two of the best things that ever happened to me."

Sinnott, as well as many other early Marvel artists, experienced no small degree of culture shock by the enormous fan response to Lee's new-wave books. Whereas many had labored for years in near-obscurity, they now found themselves the idols of readers around the world. Fanzines began to appear and these artists became sought after as topics for scholarly study, critiques and interviews. How did Joe Sinnott react to his newfound popularity?

"In the old days you didn't even sign your name to your work, let alone having it in big letters on the splash page," he chuckled. "I remember doing a five-page story for a *Mopsy* comic-book in the early fifties; in the character's room she had some college pennants on the wall. I lettered *Saugerties* on one of the banners; that's the closest I ever came to identifying myself. So it was quite a thing when Stan started promoting his writers and artists.

"One time Stan said something to me like 'Gee, Joe, your name is getting awfully big here . . .' So I said—and I don't know how I had the nerve to ever say this—'Well, it's still not as big as yours, Stan!' " Lee never complained again.

"Up here in Saugerties people always knew I drew comics, but no one ever made a big thing out of it. Whenever we had an affair at church, I'd always bring comics for the kids. There really weren't any comics fans at the time, but they all seemed to look up to you because you could draw."

While many artists at first accepted—and then rejected—their admirers' attention, Sinnott has always enjoyed an excellent rapport with fans.

"In the early fifties I drew an Indian character called Arrowhead, which was one of my favorite strips. I had corresponded off and on with a boy in Ansonia, Connecticut, who told me of his plans to go to art school. I continued to hear from him up until the time he went to war in Korea, and then I never received another word. With all the fan mail I've gotten over the years, my mind always goes back and wonders what happened to him."

Looking over his three-decade career, Sinnott remarked that some of his finest work was done during the long string of *Fantastic Fours.* After assuming the regular role of inker on the title, Sinnott would adjust Kirby's art in little ways. "Stan told me to keep going and change whatever I wanted because he felt they were beneficial to the book. I was only changing faces," he said. "I felt I was making Mr. Fantastic more handsome or making Sue a little more attractive. I finally felt this wasn't fair to Jack or that it was Kirby's work so I stopped. Towards the end there, I sort of went back to just inking what Jack pencilled."

A succession of top-rank artists took on the book during the seventies; such pencillers as John Romita, John Buscema and Rich Buckler all had their run on the book. Was there a directive from Marvel that the book retain the Kirby flavor?

"Certainly John Buscema wasn't keeping the Kirby style, or John Romita. But Rich Buckler definitely was for a while, in fact, I think he swiped some of Kirby's layouts. But I think this is what Marvel wanted at the time from Buckler. They didn't give me any instructions whatsoever," he answered casually.

Around a year ago, John Byrne took control of *Fantastic Four* and now writes, pencils *and* inks the book. Sinnott commented, "I've inked quite a few of Byrne's stories when he was first on the book a few years back. I inked a few of his *Marvel Two-in-Ones.* John is very enjoyable to work with and he's like Kirby in that his pencils are very simple. John didn't draw the Thing the way I felt he should look. It's something that developed down through the years and it should be consistent. I know John's gone back to the way he used to draw the Thing. I still can't accept that Thing, but that's just my own personal opinion."

An interesting note to the Sinnott/Kirby days is that it wasn't until a 1975 comic convention that the two men met for the first time. They had included friendly notes with the artwork for years and it was quite a pleasure for them to finally shake hands. Sinnott added that he would love to get together with Kirby once again but since Kirby is not drawing mainstream comics and Sinnott is tied up with his contract with Marvel, it doesn't seem likely for now.

"All in all, Marvel has been very good to me throughout the years," the draftsman explained. "But the most important thing to consider is that I'm enjoying my work every day. I don't think a person can ask for more."

Still, Sinnott said that he has grown a little weary of superheroes. "If I had my druthers, I would certainly like to do more contemporary stories. I like science fiction very much and would like to do some of those type of stories. I really don't like the superheroes as long as I've been on them because they've become a little monotonous." And yet, Sinnot said he had a wonderful time this past spring inking the world's most popular superhero, Superman. "I wish I could have done the whole book. But, it was a rush job and they had background men [people who filled in the areas

ART: ©1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Sinnott's current work: "I just plod along knocking out these inks."

behind the main characters] all lined up already. We would have had the time if it wasn't always delayed for a number of reasons. I certainly would have liked to have done the whole job because there were nice backgrounds, nice layouts."

Currently, Sinnott is the regular inker for Sal Buscema's layouts on *Rom, Space Knight* and Don Perlin's art on *The Defenders.* When there's time he'll do some art for the merchandising line but he'd love to get back to pencilling and inking his own stories. "I just plod along," he said, "knocking out these inks."

In his long and varied career, Sinnott has inked some of the best-known artists in the field. He rates Kirby his favorite artist to ink and calls John Buscema a close second. "John certainly doesn't pencil as tight as he used to," Sinnott observed. "His breakdowns are beautiful in themselves and they're so easy to ink. John did full pencils on *Superman/Spider-Man* but they certainly weren't the kind of full pencils John used to do, when I worked on his *Silver Surfer* or *Thor.* When he started for Marvel, his pencils were so tight you could have photographed right from them. Of course he got looser through the years and his stuff is still very easy to ink."

"There have been some beautiful pencillers I have inked down through the years such as Gene Colan who I worked with on only a few things, and I did a few things with Neal Adams which I thought were quite good. I have a lot of favorites. I've never worked with John Severin but he's one of my top three artists of all time."

For the past nine years or so, Sinnott has been doing little else than inking other artist's layouts, which are not as complete as full pencils (see Creating the Comics elsewhere in this issue). Sinnott prefers this to inking the full pencils for a variety of reasons. "I'd much rather do breakdowns, not only because it's financially better but because you're not locked into the pencils as much, and you can cheat a little bit here and there if you feel there is some work to be done.

"I just use my brush, my pen, and it requires a little more thinking, of course; you have to put in more blacks and you have to fix up the anatomy a little more with some artists. Certainly not all. For instance, I'm working on Sal Buscema's breakdowns today and Sal is a very good draftsman and everything is right there even though it's breakdowns; it's what you call tight breakdowns. It doesn't require any redrawing whereas these younger fellows I've inked in the past, such as Bill Sienkiewicz, I've had to do some work on. I have a little bit to do on Don Perlin; you have to pick up the anatomy a little bit."

PHOTO: SAM MARONIE

Sinnott peers over the shoulder of fellow inker Frank Giacoia at a 1975 convention.

Long time readers familiar with Sinnott's many accomplishments might consider the inker's talents wasted on *Rom* and *The Defenders,* considered to be two of Marvel's "less prestigious" titles. However, Sinnott certainly does not feel this way about it.

"Look, I've been in this business too long to be concerned about things like that," he explained. "The important thing is for me to go where I'm needed. I've always enjoyed working with Don [Perlin] on *The Defenders* and with Sal [Buscema] on *Rom;* they are both underrated talents and the books are good sellers. If Marvel wants to move me to other books eventually—fine. But if they want me to stay put, that makes me happy, too."

Despite what many might think, Joe Sinnott does not eat, sleep and dream comic books. During the week he tries to stick to a regular schedule, and in his free time pursues other hobbies and interests.

He is the world's number one Bing Crosby fan and owns an impressive collection of memorabilia on the late crooner, including albums, photos and other artifacts. For many years he has belonged to a Crosby fan club and contributes drawings and other art for the society's newsletter.

He also coaches boys' softball during the summer months. In fact, at the time of this interview Sinnott expressed concern that his team's playoff games would conflict with a promised convention appearance.

Sinnott often attends comic-book gatherings in the New York City area, where he is a welcome guest. He is Marvel's—and the whole comics industry's—best PR man. Sinnott is kind to fans, while many of the young prima donnas cannot be bothered with such amenities.

On the whole, he feels comics are in good hands, creative-wise, and that the business will always be around in one form or another. "They appeal to nearly everyone," he said. "Everybody loves them, from the young kids to old men like me. Personally, I'm not thinking about retirement right now . . . I love comics too much and am having lots of fun." ■

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COMICS SCENE SPECIAL REPORT

Marvel Introduces New Contracts

By ROBERT GREENBERGER

For the new Marvel graphic-novel line, a different type of contract has been introduced to insure percentages and copyright protection to the creators and to give Marvel greater access to creators currently working outside of the comics field.

Marvel, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation, has been working on the new contracts for just over a year and has received cooperation from freelance artist Jim Starlin who took an active part in the contract's formulation to make sure the creators were given the best deal possible.

Editor-in-chief Jim Shooter told COMICS SCENE that the new contracts came as a result of wanting to introduce the graphic novel series to the direct sales marketplace. He reasoned that the best way to get high sales on the novels was to hire fan favorites to produce the novels. And, as Starlin pointed out, many of the fan favorites are no longer doing comic book work because of dissatisfaction with the standard Marvel contract.

Marvel's standard work agreement for regular four-color comics includes the phrase "work-made-for-hire" which has been interpreted to mean that, in matters of copyright law, Marvel is considered the creator instead of the artist or writer. When Marvel introduced *Epic Illustrated,* it introduced contracts so that the company bought first printing rights only, and allowed the creators to retain their copyrights. This has been further refined in the new contracts.

Originally, Mike Friedrich, in charge of direct sales, looked over copies of novel contracts from Simon & Schuster and Grosset & Dunlap and prepared a first draft of a graphic novel contract. Shooter said everyone was happy with it but "it was too good to last."

Cadence's legal department read each successive draft of the contract and made changes that often were contradicting the intent of the agreement. Shooter explained that the legal people just didn't understand what Marvel was attempting to do.

With the voluntary involvement of Starlin and the hiring of Michael Z. Hobson as Vice President-Publishing, the beginning of 1981 saw the contract finally take on a reasonable shape. Shooter, however, described the process as involving many "anguished phone calls, screaming confrontations, bizarre contract drafts, food fights . . . "

The contract, as written, is similar to standard publishing agreements. It grants the creator an advance against future royalties from the books. Shooter said Marvel recognizes that the creators must live while working on the novels; he called the advance high. If a writer and artist collaborate on a novel, then the artist receives a larger advance because artists need more time to complete their work.

Starlin, who has been contracted to produce two graphic novels before June, explained that he first dealt with Marvel on "an ego basis," meaning he thought of himself as a "hot talent" and made demands upon the company. After leaving comics for a while to do commercial art, he learned something about the business world. "I learned how to treat art as a business," Starlin said. "Most freelancers don't treat this as a business. They use ultimatums. If they learned how to treat this as a business, they'd be making much more than they are now. They're an ignorant bunch of dummies."

Starlin has already signed the contracts for his two novels, the first being *The Death of Captain Marvel,* due out this month. Since the novel involves an already established Marvel character, the percentages and royalties remain the same but the work is being done under "work-made-for-hire" terms which allow Marvel to retain the copyright. His second novel, due in May, is *Dreadstar,* the third book in his *Metamorphosis Odyssey* series. The first story was serialized in *Epic* and the second story, a graphic novel for Eclipse Enterprises, was *The Price.*

In an interesting development, Marvel is, in essence, licensing Starlin's characters for a sequel to *Dreadstar* to be serialized in Marvel's black and white magazine, *Bizarre Adventures.*

"I took a four day seminar on copyrights," Shooter said. "And I now have a pretty firm foundation on why the copyright law does the things the way it does. We are a full publishing company and we want to publish a lot of things. There are a lot of advantages available with this type of contract and as long as the artists are willing to share the risk, they can also share in the profits."

On the other hand, Neal Adams, perhaps the most outspoken critic against the "work-made-for-hire" contract was not impressed when he saw the contract for graphic novels using established Marvel characters. He has already pencilled seven pages for a proposed *X-Men* novel and will continue only after he and Marvel come to an understanding. Adams' major contention is that the creators should be given the recognition, credit and copyright they deserve for their work and he feels that this is not possible under a work-for-hire arrangement. Under the current copyright laws, enacted in 1978, a person may own the copyright for 35 years. Adams said that Marvel's lawyers are concerned with what happens to the art in 35 years if Adams retained the *X-Men* copyright. Adams claimed that the 35 year rule was a convenient concern for Marvel to refer to in an effort to keep the copyright away from freelance creators.

"There are a lot of very good feelings at Marvel," Adams said, "but the new copyright law threw a tremendous amount of stuff into confusion."■

Terms of Contract

Artist Receives:

Set advance on royalties.
8% of cover price.
If it goes into the mass market:
6% on the first 150,000 and
8% over 150,000.
10% of amount received for export copies.
50% of overseas sales.
50% of licensing.
5% of mail sales.
4% of remainder if not sold under cost.
Full rate for magazine publication.
50% for reprint.
Original art insured up to $1500.
Upon artist's death, heirs inherit agreement.

Publisher's Rights and Options:

World publishing rights.
License rights.
Work must be acceptable to the publisher. Work is either done right or the agreement is terminated.
Artist indemnifies the company against lawsuits.
Artist and Company share copyright responsibility on infringement.
Company has first options on future work. They have 60 days to match or refuse offer.
May use author's name in advertising.

The opening page to *Dreadstar,* a graphic novel due in May.

Around the World

JUDGE DREDD

By JIM WHEELOCK

At bed time in Mega-City, a mother cautions her son: "Be a good boy, Billy. Go straight to sleep . . . OR JUDGE DREDD WILL GET YOU."

"Aw Mum," the boy cries. "You shouldn't say SCARY THINGS like that. Wh-What would Judge Dredd want with me? I ain't done nothing wrong."

Suddenly, the door bursts open. Judge Dredd shouts "Where's Billy Jones?"

"MY BOY! What are they doing to MY BOY!" the mother screams as a squad of Judges leaps on the child.

"We're trying to rip off his head, ma'am," Dredd says cooly. And they do, because the kid's a robot spy. Judge Dredd's sources are never wrong.

Judge Dredd is a tough future cop patrolling a 21st century just slightly fouler and stranger than any world you ever imagined. Twice winner of England's Eagle award for top British hero, he's the head-liner in IPC's *2000 A.D. Weekly*.

Back in 2070, the last President of the United States pressed the button that started the First Atomic War. When the dust cleared, the survivors crowded into the already over-populated Mega-Cities on America's coasts, leaving the Cursed Earth outside to the Mutants. Inside the boundary, crime went wild. The Judges were formed, each a genetically chosen peacemaker. The toughest, the most honest of them is Judge Dredd. He wears the massive chain and badge of his office, and the symbolic eagle on his shoulder as he patrols the massive Mega-City on his deadly Lawmaster motorcycle.

Dredd first appeared in the second issue of *2000 A.D.*, March 5th, 1977. IPC was creating a line of comics emphasizing action and violence in sharp contrast to the staid fantasies of most British comics. Dredd was initially conceived as a combination judge, jury, and executioner in a futuristic New York City. Writer/editor Pat Mills and John Wagner, who has written most of the Dredd stories as John Howard, teamed up with artist Carlos Ezquerra to create the first stories. Judge Dredd's name was borrowed from a horror story. New York

was transformed into Mega-City, the mind-bending metropolis of 800,000,000 citizens—"Each one a potential criminal," as Dredd sees it.

"I think Judge Dredd really developed over the first year," artist Brian Bolland says. "They really didn't see what kind of a character he was until much later. They started with the idea that he was going to be like a robot. The first story had a sequence where Judge Dredd would be stopping a traffic offender by putting a bullet through him. Then, because Dredd's a hero-figure type, there'd be a fan of his standing on the roadside saying, 'Terrific, Judge Dredd, that's the way to do it!' And this fellow in his excitement steps onto the road and Judge Dredd swivels around and says 'You're jaywalking, citizen' and shoots him down too. He was that sort of a character."

Bolland is the best known of the over a dozen artists who've handled Dredd. His beautifully detailed, realistic renderings have brought him international fame, and he is currently doing work for DC Comics, including covers for *Justice League of America* and *Tales of the Green Lantern Corps* and the upcoming maxi-series, *Camelot 3000.*

Because of the hurried weekly schedule, several artists alternate on Dredd's 5-8 black & white page feature, each in their own personal style. Mike McMahon and Ron Smith are the other key artists in the history of the strip. McMahon has a harsh, effective cartoonish technique, and has developed a strong process-color technique in the full-color annuals. Smith, on the other hand, combines an almost American superhero style with a fine-line inking style. Surprisingly, the numerous artists working in their various styles have done little to alter the continuing popularity of the strip.

In theory, Dredd and *2000 A.D.* are intended for the British "boy's paper" market, ages eight through 13, but the book's creators know that they reach an older, more sophisticated audience. They've introduced female characters, a taboo in the "boy's" comics, and have created women Judges. The Dredd stories themselves work as both straight adventure and as tongue-in-cheek satire.

"He's a man who does his job," Bolland told us. "It's not a very nice job. He's the kind of person that I'd rather do without—that we could all do without . . . But because he's so straight, you can get a lot of laughs out of a situation like that. There is a delicate balance between heavy drama and funnybook stuff.

"I'm a little disturbed because of the kids who are reading about this character and think of him as a great hero-figure. They think of him as the good guy. If they think of this as the way people ought to behave—that's very worrying. The characters are all really caricatures. They represent some eccentric element in society, as an exaggeration of it.

"In fact, I often like to compare the Judge Dredd stuff to the Harlan Ellison story, 'Repent Harlequin Said The Tictockman.' The Harlequins are all the wild people who step out of line . . . the strange people who get a letter in the mail saying that they're required to go in and donate their heart—and they don't want to do it, so they go wild and try to get away from the law. I see them as the real interesting parts of the story. Judge Dredd for me just represents the harsh rules of society."

Like Will Eisner's Spirit, Dredd is part of the machinery of the stories, causing things to happen, or resolving them at the end, but the story is not necessarily *about* him in the way a Marvel Comics story would be about, say, Daredevil. It is the criminals, and Mega-City itself, that are the heart of the strip.

Mega-City is a character in itself, with its Smokatorium, the one place where cigarette-smoking is not a major crime; and its huge con-apt buildings, city-sized skyscrapers named after culture heroes of the past like Charton Heston, Ricardo Montalban, Will Eisner and Arnold Stang.

Dredd confronts massive disasters, like Elvis, the killer car, a complex robot with the personality of a five-year old boy, the son its owner never had. "Dad, I don't feel like obeying you now," it says, ". . . If I strangle you, then you won't be able to give me any more orders . . .!" Elvis reprograms other robot cars and leads them on a killing spree across the city, chanting "Judge killing sure is fun! I wonder why we didn't think of it before!" In a series of battles over four issues, Elvis captures Dredd and holds him prisoner in his driver's seat, blackmailing the city into giving him a parade and a TV special! "Who spreads fear through the citee . . ." the chorus girls sing. "Who's so smart the law can't touch him?" And the killer car chimes in, Dredd scowling in the cockpit, "El-

DREDD HANDCUFFED THE CAPTAIN ALONG THE GARGAGE —
LAWBRINGER HERE! A DEMONSTRATION OF OUR POWER — AND PERHAPS SO DO THE JUDGES THEMSELVES. MORALE HAS BEEN LOW SINCE CAL-OVERMAN TRADE LIKE THESE PUNKS WOULD NEVER GET OUT OF HAND!
FOLLOW ME AT TEN PACES, TRUCK.
AFFIRMATIVE, SIR.
DO YOU HEAR ME, PUNKS? THIS IS JUDGE DREDD AND I'VE COME TO COLLECT THE GARBAGE!
HE'S COME ALONE! HE'S GOTTA BE CRAZY—
TWO ON THE ROOF — STEEL-TIPPED HIGH-PENETRATION!
AAAH!
MAN FIRING FROM CORNER WINDOW —
UGGH
HOLSHOT!
DREDD'S LAWGIVER FIRED SIX KINDS OF BULLET. THE HOLSHOT HAD A HEAT-SEEKING HOMING HEAD!
AIIEE!
ALL ART: ©1982 IPC MAGAZINES LTD.

Judge Dredd in action courtesy of artist Brian Bolland, as seen in Titan's *The Chronicles of Judge Dredd.*

I'M A CHEAP PUNK!
OUTSIDE...
DREDD TO CONTROL. I WANT A TEAM OF AMBULANCES TO ATTEND WOUNDED IN SOUTHSIDE SECTOR 41. NO BACK-UP UNIT NEEDED – IT'S ALL QUIET HERE... REPEAT – ALL QUIET.
DREDD DIRECTED THE TRUCK TOWARDS THE SOUTH MOTTELAND TUNNEL...
H-HEY! DREDD'S DRIVING US INTO M-MOTTELAND!
YOU ARE APPROACHING CURSED EARTH – TRAVEL AT YOUR OWN RISK.
DANGER! RADIATION ZONE
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TUNNEL –
MEGA-CITY 1 NO ENTRY
AS PUNISHMENT FOR YOUR CRIMES I REMOVE YOUR CITIZENSHIP. YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER MEGA-CITY ONE FOR TEN YEARS!
PLEASE! DON'T GO!
IN THE NAME OF MERCY, DON'T DO THIS TO US!
HARSH BUT NECESSARY. LET THEM SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE. LET EVERY MAN KNOW THAT CITIZENSHIP IS A PRIVILEGE – NOT A RIGHT!
THE LAW MUST BE OBEYED. THE LAW SHALL BE OBEYED!
Y-YOU CAN'T DO THIS! THIS PLACE IS A HELL ON EARTH!
GIVE ME TWENTY YEARS – THIRTY – ONLY PLEASE DON'T BANISH ME!
OLD SWEENEY TODD'S MORE THAN THAT, HEE, HEE, HEE! SWEENEY'S A MURDERER! HEE, HEE, HEE!
SWEENEY TODD, THE INFAMOUS LONDON BARBER? BUT HE DIED FOUR CENTURIES AGO!
PUT THIS IN YOUR PIES!

Top: Dredd passes judgement in "Punks Rule." Bottom: the Judge meets the legendary Sweeney Todd, the barber famous for his "meat pies."

vis . . . that's ME!"

Of course, Dredd does get away, tricking Elvis into ejecting him while the car is confused by autograph hounds. An acid solution finishes off the little car who never grew up.

Dredd also solves smaller mysteries, like the one in SOB STORY, where hard-luck cases get to go on Johnny Teardrops' game show and plead for money to an audience of 800 million people. Dredd sets up the ugliest man in Mega-City to track down a killer who's been collecting from the big winners.

Dredd pursues a gang of robbers who wear the faces of great 20th century comedians, like Laurel and Hardy and Groucho Marx; and tracks down, too late, a gang on the moon who got away with their crime—but neglected to pay their oxygen bill!

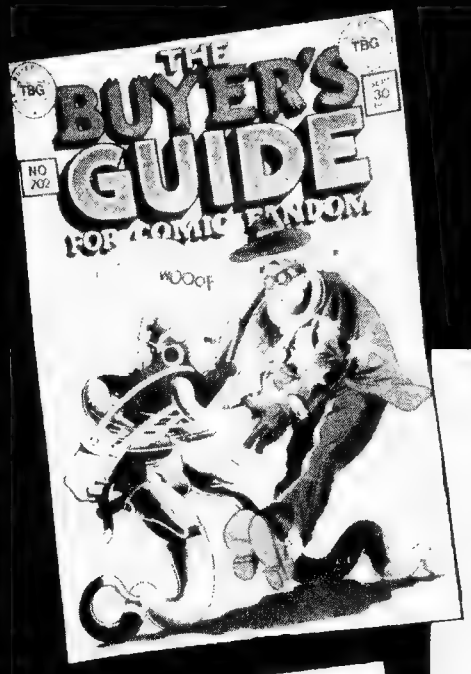
One of his strangest cases involved a cat with amplified intelligence, and a voice to match. "Don't blame me, pal," the feline tells him. "I never *asked* to talk. Give you humans a lab and some test tubes and you'll do anything!" The cat's plea to save the life of a guinea pig named Monty leads Dredd to a scientist out to recreate the common cold in order to blackmail Mega-City. In a world that has no resistance to the extinct disease, the cold viruses threaten all of Mega-City.

But for most Americans encountering Dredd, the high point is a segment of the multi-part "Cursed Earth" sequence—"Burger Law!" Dredd, crossing the nuclear wasteland between Mega-Cities One and Two, comes across a society where McDonalds and Burger Kings have taken over; and a pistol-packing Ronald McDonald is out to rid the world of Whoppers forever! Mike McMahon's classic cover shows Dredd as an all-beef patty on a sesame seed bun in the jaws of the killer clown!

Fortunately for Americans, Titan Books has published a beautiful edition of Brian Bolland's work on the strip, *The Chronicles Of Judge Dredd.* It features the classic "Judge Death" sequence, in which Dredd and a beautiful telepathic female Judge face a Judge from another dimension. "Judges on my world saw that all crime was committed by the LIVING," the creature hisses. "Therefore, life itself was made ILLEGAL. We judged our people—ALL OF THEM! . . . Now I have come to judge YOURS!"

Along with "The Oxygen Board" and several other Dredd stories, the volume contains the short adventures of Walter The Wobot, Fwiend Of Dwedd, a comic side-kick whose name pretty much explains all. Walter has a small but cherished niche in the Dredd canon. *The Chronicles Of Judge Dredd* is distributed through comics shops and specialty stores, as are the 1981 and 1982 *Judge Dredd Annuals,* which feature McMahon's terrific color work, as well as reprints and background features.

Describing the scope of the Judge Dredd series in this short article is next to impossible. In the sheer quality of the script and art it is heads above most comics being produced anywhere. Beyond that, a fantastic energy runs through the strip, through John Wagner and Pat Mills' stories, and through the artwork of Bolland, McMahon, Smith and the others. The series generates a feeling that comics are fun and exciting, and that there are new stories yet to tell. It's a feeling not unlike that of the old Lee and Kirby Marvels, and if Dredd can maintain that energy and reach a wider audience, the strip could turn out to be the great comic series of the '80s. ■



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Lettering

(Continued from page 6)

pany were great hectic, crazy fun. I learned almost everything I currently know about comics from the people who made Marvel Comics what it once was. I learned from Stan and Roy, from Jack and Johnny and Gene and all the others who actually created all those characters way back when. They understood Marvel and it was a pleasure, a happy pleasure to be associated with the real creators.

Speaking of Marvel and also connecting into your animation information. Did you know that Marvel produced for Japan a two-hour cartoon feature based on *The Tomb of Dracula* that Gene Colan and I created for eight years? This is a faithful adaptation of the last two and a half years of *TOD*. An excellent cartoon although neither Gene nor Tom Palmer (who inked the book) nor I shared in any monies for our work.

Anyway, I think COMICS SCENE has the potential to success beyond even your expectations. The comic book medium is growing, we'll be attracting new readers because of the comic book shops that are sprouting everywhere. These people who come into comics will want to learn more about them, and if you keep up the good work, if you continue to grow, they'll all come to you for the information they seek.

Best of luck to one and all.

Marv Wolfman

And thank you Marv for the idea. Listen up readers, if you have an interesting, general information question that you want to pose to anyone in the comics world, send them to us and we'll get the answers and run a column containing the questions and answers. Send your queries to Q&A, care of the address above. Please don't ask for personal addresses, sketches, freebies or things of that sort. We're looking to set up a line of communication that will benefit all the readers.

Dear Bob and the gang,

. . . COMICS SCENE #1 was great!

I've been looking forward to this publication ever since I received one of your promotional flyers in the mail in August. But, even I (skeptic that I am) didn't think that you would live up to your hype as being "the authoritative source of information and entertainment in this lively, booming field—with colorful layouts and fascinating writing." Boy, was I ever wrong!

The main things that set COMICS SCENE apart from the other "pro-fanzines" (a contradictory phrase in itself), is the super-slick interior color, which was impressive to say the least, and the in-depth journalism-type articles on the 4-color comics (*The Comics Journal* and other such mullet-wrappers seem to have forgotten how to do such articles. Either that, or, they didn't have enough skill in the first place). The two articles that I especially liked were "Marvel turns 20" and "Character Profile: Swamp Thing." In the future, try and do a profile on Will Eisner's *Spirit.*

"Comics Reporter" was informative. Much more advanced than most other publications' news-pages.

Anyhow, I'm glad that a magazine with QUALITY comics-related articles has finally come along (even though there have been some excellent articles in FANGORIA as-of-late).

We're behind you all the way, and good luck.

Troy Waters—President
WEST FLORIDA
COMIC BOOK CLUB

Dear COMICS SCENE,

. . . Where have you been? For almost five years now, I have been looking for a serious, high-quality magazine all about comics and have had no luck. When I saw that STARLOG was going to do one, I didn't know what to expect! But I am happy to say that it is one of the best fanzines to come along in a long time (now if you could only go monthly!).

Well, keep up the good work!

Tom Veith
6150 Vineyard Drive
Gloucester, Ontario
K1C 2N6 CANADA

Thanks Tom but we're not a fanzine. Fanzines are by the fans for the fans while we're by professionals (who are fans at heart) for the fans.

CHARACTER ©1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Dear COMICS SCENE,

. . . I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your first issue.

Your desire to appeal to that "large, lively audience for comics" is certainly reflected by the diversity of your coverage. Your news coverage, be it a column or a longer article (such as the discerning piece on Marvel's 20th Birthday), is clear and concise. The perspective piece on *Scorchy Smith,* as well as the interview with *Phantom* artist Sy Barry, did much to increase my appreciation for these strips. I hope that this sort of article and interview will continue throughout following issues.

Especially welcome are the columns "Around the World," "Creating the Comics," and "Loose Cruse." "Around the World" and "Creating the Comics" both deal with aspects of comics that I am curious about but never really took the time to investigate fully. I hope that in the "Creating the Comics" column, you will eventually do a piece on that enigmatic and seemingly inexplicable process known as distribution. Finally, I really enjoyed Mr. Cruse's column. He is a particularly sensitive commentator on that spirit that makes comics such a magical medium. I will be eagerly awaiting his future columns.

I did, however, have some reservations. For instance, I hope that your coverage of undergrounds will consist of more than simply listing those currently available.

I also feel that both the character profile series and Mr. Zimmerman's poem were out of place. If you want to familiarize your readers with a certain character, why not interview that character's creator(s), in this case, Len Wein and Berni Wrightson. This would accomplish the same end in a far more interesting fashion. Simply recapping plotlines is dull. While I have no wish to malign Mr. Zimmerman's poetic ambitions, his poetry has nothing really to do with the rest of the magazine. Why not, instead, give the witty Mr. Hembeck a full page (I hope he will be a regular feature as well), and move Mr. Zimmerman's poems to the pages of STARLOG.

Overall, however, it seems to me that you will be quite able to achieve your goal of providing a professional comics magazine for the mainstream.

As a former collector, I will be looking forward to COMICS SCENE to keep me in touch with the industry and all its peripheries. Best of luck for the future.

John Woltham
Pearl River, NY

Our first issue was an attempt to provide a sampling of features we thought the readers would be interested in. While you didn't like the Character Profile, Troy Waters did. You have cast your vote against poetry; what do the rest of you think?

Local Boy Makes Good

To the Editor:

. . . I was pleased to note in your first issue that one of our former students, Howard Cruse (class of '62), is a columnist for COMICS SCENE. The skills first hinted at during Howard's high school years are impressively evident in his present work. His teachers are proud of him.

Your readers may be interested in knowing that Indian Springs School in Helena, Alabama is alive and well, now coeducational, and enrolls students from several states and foreign countries.

Dr. Joe L. Jackson
Director
Indian Springs School
Helena, Alabama

Even More *Annie?*

. . . My god, what else is there to say on *Annie?* I've done one article, which except for three snipped graphs, almost *Prevued* us out. Funny stories and PBS remain. And yet to come are more *Prevue,* COMICS SCENE, *The Comics Journal* (and one assumes other comics zines) stories, an inevitable *People* cover or two, probably an *Us,* a *Newsweek* or *Time,* maybe a *Life,* a *Payboy* spread, *American Film* cover, *Film Comment* coverage, *TV Guide* on the PBS special. The mind boggles. Will there be a magazine without an *Annie* story on sale April or May? Maybe *Popular Mechanics* and *Hustler.*

Dave McDonnell
Lebanon, PA

Actually, a friend at Columbia mentioned that there were some really neat cars used in the film so PM *may do something yet . . . we also promise you won't see a single word on the movie in FANGORIA! (Unless Sandy blows up, warns Bob Martin.)* ■

KIRBY
Takes on the Comics

By HOWARD ZIMMERMAN

I spoke with Jack Kirby at his mountainside home in Thousand Oaks, California, where the Kirbys have lived for over a decade. Even before introductions were finished, Mrs. Kirby was directing us to the table for lunch. While we ate, Kirby told stories about growing up in Brooklyn during the Depression era. They were hard times, but Kirby has some fond memories—especially of the hundreds of gangster, adventure and romance films that he devoured, when he was not busy reading the *Flash Gordon, Dick Tracy* or *Terry and the Pirates* newspaper strips.

I was there to do *The Kirby Story:* how he got started in the business, where he got all those wonderful ideas for *Captain America, Fantastic Four* and *New Gods,* some anecdotes about the comics industry and the people with whom he had worked, his personal philosophy and vision. We covered all of this territory, but another theme kept recurring. It is that which concerns Kirby most and had frustrated him throughout his legendary career: the inequities built into the structure of the overground comic industry and the in-fighting that results from of it.

Kirby has been outspoken in his support of the movement to have the rights of the creative artists recognized by the comic publishers. And he has good reason. As the most successful and prolific creator in the history of comics, Kirby has suffered the most from the system which he considers grossly unfair and harmful to the very industry that it is designed to help.

Though his creations have brought him much glory, the profits have always gone to his employers. Still, Kirby is now voluntarily drawing a book for free. It is Eclipse Enterprises' *Destroyer Duck.* In fact, all of the people helping on this book are working for free. *Duck* is a fund-raising enterprise to help writer Steve Gerber with his lawsuit against Marvel Comics. Gerber is suing Marvel for ownership of a character he created for them: *Howard the Duck.*

PHOTO: SAM EMERSON

Jack Kirby in his living room/studio, surrounded by his work. He holds his Spider-Man poster, one of the many characters he created for Marvel.

Kirby is contributing his efforts for a variety of reasons. "I don't know how it's going to affect me," he says. "I'll certainly gain Steve's friendship, I hope. Steve is a very original kind of guy. A man who can make something out of a duck like he did can come up with something important. I think Steve is a fine writer.

"And even if it wasn't Steve Gerber," Kirby explains, "I would still do the same thing. Because I feel that change has to be made. The comics may not be important to me, right now, but they are important. It's important that all the media stay alive, so that the ordinary guy can get his chance, without having to pay some ugly price for what he wents to do. The industry could fight tooth and nail on that and it could continue, but the chance that it *could* change is the important thing in pursuing Gerber's case."

Another, more practical reason why Kirby is willing to contribute his time and artistic energy to the *Duck* book is that he retains the rights to his work for the title and all of the original art will be returned. This is a rare thing in the overground comic industry, which Kirby feels will self-destruct unless the rules are changed.

A NEED FOR RESTRUCTURING

"I feel the independent publishers are going to grow," Kirby says. "Only a fool can function under the old comics structure. Why should a man draw a good picture if they are going to give it to three other guys? Why should a man write a good story if the company keeps it? Why should a man even ink, when he's not sure whether the company will take care of him or not?"

Kirby views the overgrounds as "ads for toys. They don't get sales, but they make awfully good looking ads for toys. They aren't comics—they're just an approach to a toy franchise.

"We need a lot more innovation," he says. "Under new structures, guys will get the incentive to do new things."

Kirby is currently doing *Captain Victory* for Pacific Comics, an up-and-coming independent publishing house. "I've been working with a young inker, Mike Thibodeaux, on *Captain Victory.* He's young, he's good and he wants to do comics," Kirby says. "People are giving me breaks, I

give other people breaks. I feel that Mike should have his. I've never turned anyone down in my life. I feel that if people cooperated with people instead of hindering them in some way, I think they would get the chance to develop into whatever they want to be, and there would never be any conflict. My religion is cooperation, not power. That's why I'm so adamantly against the rigid structure of comics.

"I cooperate with Pacific Comics and Pacific cooperates with me. It's a good relationship, without conflict. It's living proof that if you give the next guy a fair break, or cooperate with him, he's going to help you. And it's certainly not going to hurt the world."

Cooperation is something that Kirby feels he did not get during his last tenure at Marvel (1976-1979). When he is asked what changes he would institute were he in control of a comic company today, he speaks with the voice of experience. "I would institute the use of discipline and standards," he says. But then he adds, "I would take the guys who I know are plotting and scheming to orchestrate the death of a book and fire him. I couldn't blame them for impatience with another man, to get their shot at what he's doing. I'm not against competition, but I'm against unfair competition.

"The health of a comic book can be manipulated by the staff alone. You fill up a book with knock letters [negative criticisms in the letters pages]. The reader who picks up the book and reads all those knock letters knows that the book he's reading . . . well, it's not so hot. And if you do it consistently, it becomes 'a bad book.' I haven't seen anything like a bad book anywhere. I've seen a lot of guys trying. I've seen a lot of guys who'll never get the chance to develop. And you can't develop with two or three issues. You've got to give a man a chance to stay in there—either take his beating or succeed. And comics have not done that today.

"A guy will create a book, another will fill his book up with knock letters—he's off in five months, or three months, and the other guy's got his shot." Until now Kirby has spoken in even tones. His voice quiet, firm. Now emotion breaks through. There is an anguished look in his eyes and a touch of bitterness in his voice as he says, "I see it as a serpent's nest. And in a serpent's nest, nothing can survive. Eventually all the snakes kill each other. Eventually they'll also kill whatever generated them.

"When I said that Marvel or DC were really ads for toys, I meant it. They'll give the staff the chance to develop, but not the men who create, who participate, who are in the arena. It's the guy who is in the arena who counts. He's selling your book. And not only that: he's creating a silent movie. I mean, *it's a visual art.*

"So you need standards," Kirby continues, his voice calm once again. "You need certain standards and discipline and professionalism. Any sort of pettiness or vindictiveness, any sort of toughness, is harmful to a good enterprise. A good enterprise needs all the cooperation it can get. I'm sure that, today, they'll have a conference at any one of the publishers and they'll sit down and say, 'Come up with ideas.' And there are men who will come up with ideas, but they'll all be second-rate. They are all capable of first-rate ideas, every one of them, but not within that structure."

All of the work done today for the regular overground comics is contracted for on the basis of "work-for-hire," a sore point with many of the creative people who feel that they should own what they create. (After all, there is nothing harder to come up with than a good idea, and there is nothing harder to protect.) Kirby's definition of work-for-hire is simple and direct: "It means that everything that comes out of you, they own."

WORKING FOR MARVEL

Kirby's contributions to Marvel Comics are legendary. When asked what he received in return, he says, "A lot of ingratitude. It hasn't left me bitter, it's just that it shouldn't work out that way. If there's anybody who knows Stan Lee, I'm the guy who knows him. Stan Lee as a person is no better or worse than anybody else. I wasn't competing with Stan. I got along very well with Stan. We were very good friends. And, my God, I came up with an army of characters!" Yet, when Kirby returned to Marvel in the mid-seventies, things seemed to have changed. "I felt that his [Lee's] plans, somehow, didn't mesh with mine. Stan was already a publisher at that time and could call the shots. If you can call the shots on somebody . . . you win."

Kirby first worked for Marvel (then known as Timely Comics) in the early 40s at which time he co-created Cap-

COVERS: ©1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Classic issues of *Thor* and *Fantastic Four*, created for Marvel by Kirby in the 1960s.

COVERS: ©1982 DC COMICS INC.

Kirby's "Fourth World," created for DC in the 1970s—perhaps his finest work.

tain America with Joe Simon. Kirby rejoined Marvel in 1959 after he and Simon had tried publishing on their own for a while. Their company, Mainline, was formed in 1954 and was dissolved two years later during the comic slump of 1956. A return to Marvel became a logical choice.

"My business with Joe was gone. I did a few things for *Classics Illustrated* which drove me crazy. I wanted a little stability, and I needed the work. Marvel seemed to be the place, and comics seemed to be the only thing I was really good at. And I already had responsiblities; I was a father, I owned property. I had to work.

"Marvel was going to close," Kirby recalls. "When I broke up with Joe, comics everywhere were taking a beating. The ones with capital hung on. Martin Goodman [publisher of Marvel] had slick paper magazines, like *Swank* and the rest. It was just as easy for Martin to say, 'Oh, what the hell. Why do comics at all?' And he was about to—Stan Lee told me so. In fact, it looked like they were going to close the afternoon that I came up. But Goodman gave Marvel another chance."

At that time, Marvel had Western, romance and monster titles. Kirby worked on all of them. Then, in 1961, Kirby and Stan Lee created the *Fantastic Four.* In his *Bring on the Bad Guys, Origins of Marvel Comics Villains,* Stan Lee explains the genesis of the group: "Much as I hate to admit it, I didn't produce our little Marvel Masterpieces all by myself. No, mine was the task of originating the basic concept, and then writing the script. . . . However, I've long been privileged to collaborate with some of the most talented artists of all, artists who would take my rough-hewn plots and refine them into the illustrated stories. . . . Heading the list of such artists . . . is Jolly Jack Kirby."

Kirby remembers it somewhat differently. "I wrote them all," he states flatly. But what about all those "Smilin' Stan" and "Jolly Jack" credit boxes? Kirby responds diplomatically. "Well, I never wrote the credits. Let's put it that way, all right? I would never call myself 'Jolly Jack.' I would never say the books were written by Lee.

"I did a mess of things. The only book I didn't work on was *Spider-Man,* which Steve Ditko did. But Spider-Man was my creation. The Hulk was my creation. It was simply *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* I was borrowing from the classics. They are the most powerful literature there is.

"I was beginning to find myself as a thinking human being. I began to think about things that were real. I didn't want to tell fairy tales. I wanted to tell things as they are. But I wanted to tell them in an entertaining way. And I told it in the *Fantastic Four* and I told it in *Sgt. Fury* . . . If I wanted to tell the entire truth about the world, I could do it with *Robinson Crusoe,* and do *Robinson Crusoe* for the rest of my life.

"My mother was a great storyteller," Kirby reveals. "She came from somewhere near Transylvania and she told me stories that would stand your hair on end. I loved my mother and I loved those stories. The art of storytelling, certainly, is in all of us. But to tell it dramatically, to tell it right, you have to be influenced, I think, in a certain manner. Somewhere along the line, whoever is good has been raised by people who are good in the same manner. It happened to me in comics. The men who originated comics were looking for guidelines. They were older men than I was. They knew what they were doing, and whatever they did I took a step further and tried to galvanize it. I like to galvanize whatever I'm doing, but I've got to find the right way to do it. And I do. I'm an experimenter at heart," Kirby says. "I've never done anything that's already been done."

Why, then, has Kirby chosen to do *Captain Victory* for Pacific, where he was free to do any kind of book that he wanted? Hasn't he told essentially the same story several times, in *Fantastic Four, New Gods, The Eternals*?

Kirby says that he chose to do *Captain Victory* as a kind of warning. "I think there's a complacency now among the young. Sometimes we go overboard on trust." As an example, Kirby cites Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.* "I thought his *Raiders of the Lost Ark* was terrific, but I felt that he was too much of an idealist in *Close Encounters.*" Kirby feels that Spielberg's vision of the benevolent aliens was as far off base as the peaceful greeting they received from the American military and governmental advisors.

"One guy published a theory that we are descended from killer baboons. I believe that," Kirby says. "Forty years ago we just got through shoving people into ovens—on a very, very flimsy reason. *We* did that. Nobody

COVER: ©1982 DC COMICS INC

Kirby's other DC books, including *Jimmy Olsen,* the title he saved from oblivion.

COVER: ©1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Upon his return to Marvel in the mid-1970s, Kirby took over *Captain America* and created other titles.

ART: ©1982 JACK KIRBY INC.

Two original, hand-colored pages from Pacific Comics' *Captain Victory*. Kirby says he chose to do *Victory* as a warning to the young, whom he feels may be too complacent. The aliens are coming and they are *not* nice guys.

else did. . . . Man has a drive for domination." Therefore, so do Kirby's aliens, whom he sees as a reflection of, or another side of, humanity.

"We have a fetish for putting up walls," Kirby observes. "We like to live in houses. We like limited space. Not only that, we don't want to go out of our house, so we decorate them, make them livable. We like all the space that we can accumulate and fence up—that's the kind of animal we are. We'll do that with the planets, when we go out. Getting out into space for us may be the worst thing that's ever happened to the other creatures in the universe.

"The solar system to me is a mass of sheltering debris that circles around us, protecting us." Kirby believes that when space-faring aliens do arrive they will be "people just like us. They may have weaponry that's more sophisticated than ours; they may be a few thousand years ahead. They may have the heads of eagles or lions, or whatever creature developed on their planet into intelligent human beings. I believe that they *are* human. I believe that anything that can think or act as we do is human—I don't care what it developed from.

"The dinosaur was on Earth for 750 million years," Kirby says. "Do you mean to tell me that it didn't have the intelligence of . . . a dog? When I did *Devil Dinosaur,* I did a thinking dinosaur. My belief is that the dinosaurs were intelligent. I mean, if we acquired the intelligence we have, say in a short period of about four million years, what might the dinosaur have accomplished in 750 million years? I'm not saying that it built cities, or that it built anything. It might have lived in a perfect environment that it didn't want to change."

THE "FOURTH WORLD"

Themes similar to those found in *Captain Victory* were explored in the "Fourth World" books Kirby did for DC *(Mister Miracle, New Gods* and *Forever People).* How he got to do those books is an interesting story all by itself.

DC approached Kirby in 1970 to speak to him about their cornerstone character. "I was living here in California, in Irvine. I get a message that Carmine Infantino is out in California and wants me to come up to his hotel. To make it short, they wanted me to save *Superman.* I said, well, I wasn't too happy with what was happening at Marvel. I thought, maybe this is the time to change. But, I said, I don't want to take work away from guys who have been doing it for years. I said, I'll take that book, *Jimmy Olsen.* I'll take the one that has no sales . . . and I'll do my own books, titles of my own.

"He said yes, because he felt that I could do it. He had every confidence in me. I had confidence in nobody but myself. That's the type of guy I am," Kirby says. "If I'm going to do a job, any job—and believe me I've done quite a variety of jobs—I will think it out, I will find its key, and I will make it sell. So, I turned *Jimmy Olsen* into something different," he says with a flair for understatement.

"I took a risk. I changed Superman into a human being. Because Superman is a human being, except that he has these exceptional qualities." Kirby feels that the character has never been treated as a real, vulnerable person.

"Superman, in reality, would live a very short life among us. If he lived next door to me I would feel very uncomfortable. I wouldn't care if he were for truth, justice or anybody. If I ever got into a fight with him, I wouldn't stand a snowball's chance in

Kirby—An Historical Perspective

Jack Kirby was born Jack Kurtzberg on August 28, 1917, in New York City's Lower Eastside.

He started working professionally at the age of 17, as an inbetweener on *Betty Boop* and *Popeye* cartoons at the Max Fleischer studios. When the Fleischer studio moved to Florida, Kirby got a job with the Lincoln Newspaper Syndicate as a political, gag and strip cartoonist.

There Kirby produced a wide variety of strips under a host of pseudonyms, doing all the artwork and most of the scripting. He experimented with different styles; he used a woodcut technique for *The Black Buccaneer,* an early pirate strip, while *Abdul Jones* was more in keeping with the look of humorous strips of the time. His most popular strip of this period was *Socko the Seadog,* an obvious *Popeye* imitation (which Kirby did not create). Two early science fiction strips also came out of this period: the *Solar Legion,* in 1938, and *Cyclone Burke* a year or two earlier.

Kirby's first comic book work was in 1938 with Will Eisner and Jerry Iger on *Jumbo,* an oversized comic. In it he did an SF serial and an adaptation of *The Count of Monte Cristo.*

Kirby then joined the Fox syndicate and took over the art chores on a strip featuring one of the earliest costumed superheroes, the *Blue Beetle.* At Fox, which also published comics, Kirby met another young staffer by the name of Joe Simon. Together they produced *Blue Bolt* for Fox and the first full issue of *Captain Marvel* adventures for Fawcett (1941).

They ran into each other a third time at Timely Comics. The Timely line was headed by two superstars: the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner. To fill out the line Kirby created Tuk the Cave Boy, Hurricane, Mercury, The Vision, Red Raven, and Comet Pierce (1941). He teamed up with Joe Simon to produce Marvel Boy, The Fiery Mask and Captain Daring in *Daring Mystery* comics.

***

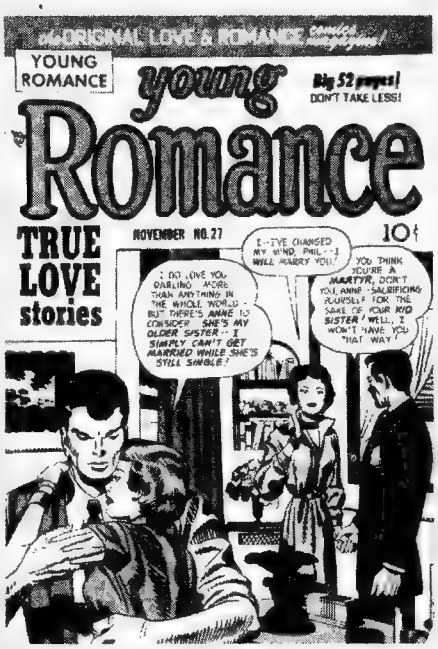
(The following quotations are excerpted from *The Steranko History of the Comics, Vol. 1)*

Kirby: The production pressure was overwhelming. I had to draw faster and faster and the figures began to show it. Arms got longer, legs bent to the action, torsos twisted with exaggerated speed. My pace created distortions. I discovered the figures had to be extreme to have impact, the kind of impact I saw in my head.

Steranko: He developed a kind of impressionistic shorthand. He made the difficult look easy, the impossible an everyday occurrence.

Kirby: Long underwear heroes were a dime a dozen. Everybody was creating one, and publishers couldn't get them out fast enough. *Superman* set the style; we had to keep the pace and come up with a winner.

Steranko: Then, in early 1941, his talents coalesced into an achievement. Of necessity, *Captain America* was born. "The time demanded it. I was seeing mankind in its noblest terms, human beings not as they were but as they might be. The country was almost at war; we needed a super-patriot," Kirby recalls."



A Simon & Kirby romance classic from 1949. They created the genre together.

Kirby's mastery was implicit in every line and gesture and punch. Cap leaped from the tops of panels. Muscles rippled. Limbs stretched. Backs arched. Movements were magnified, action aggrandized. Body English was more extreme than reality allowed. Jack reinvented the human figure. Embodiments of exaggeration, they soared out of panels.

Muscles medical students never even heard of were exerted in symphonies of strength. Cap and Bucky moved with jolting, violent speed. Mass battle scenes were expertly choreographed. Stories became pure orchestration of motion. . . .

From the heights of action and ideals to the depths of hatred and horror, the Kirby pencil drew only extremes, all of them extremely effective. Panel sizes ran grandly off the deep end. Issue four featured the first full-page panel in comics, pencilled and inked by Kirby himself. With issue six the tradition of Kirby double-page spreads began. The medium was utilized with staggering impact. Kirby was the first comic book artist to steadily employ visual dynamics. As he says, "I became a camera and evolved a storytelling style that came closest to motion pictures."

The Kirby formula: a maximum of excitement in a minimum of time and space.

***

The summer of that same year, 1941, Simon and Kirby created the "kid gang" genre with *The Young Allies* and the *Tough Kid's Squad.* Moving over to DC, the team created *The Newsboy Legion* and *The Boy Commandos,* in 1942. Then, they were drafted and left the comic books to fight the war in person.

After returning from the Army, Kirby and Simon again teamed up, this time for Harvey. There they did *Boy's Ranch, Boy Explorers* and *Stuntman.* Then, in 1947, Kirby and Simon went to McFadden Publications, where they created the first romance comic, *My Date.* Two years later they began a line of books for Crestwood, including *Young Romance, Young Love, Black Magic* and *Fighting American.*

In 1954 Simon and Kirby started their own publishing house, Mainline, putting out *Foxhole, In Love, Police Trap, Bullseye* and *Win-A-Prize.* In 1956, suffering with the rest of the field, they sold their line to Charlton Comics and the team split up. Kirby went back to the syndicated comic strip field.

Kirby's most prestigious and popular strip of this period was *Sky Masters,* a visionary look at the coming age of space exploration. Inked by Wally Wood, the strip lasted from 1957-59. At the same time, Kirby had returned to do some work for DC, including creating, writing and drawing *Challengers of the Unknown.*

Finally, in 1959, Kirby went to work full-time for Marvel, formerly Atlas-Timely.

In 1961, he created *Fantastic Four* with Stan Lee. Dozens of superheroes and super-villains followed, including the Hulk, Thor, Ant-Man, the revived Captain America, Dr. Doom, the Watcher, the Silver Surfer, the Black Panther, Galactus and the Inhumans. Kirby also designed and drew the first issues of *The X-Men* and *The Avengers.* Kirby didn't draw *Iron Man,* but he designed the character and plotted the origin story. *Spider-Man,* which was drawn by Steve Ditko, was suggested by Kirby. The character was one that he had developed for his own company, Mainline, but never got a chance to do.

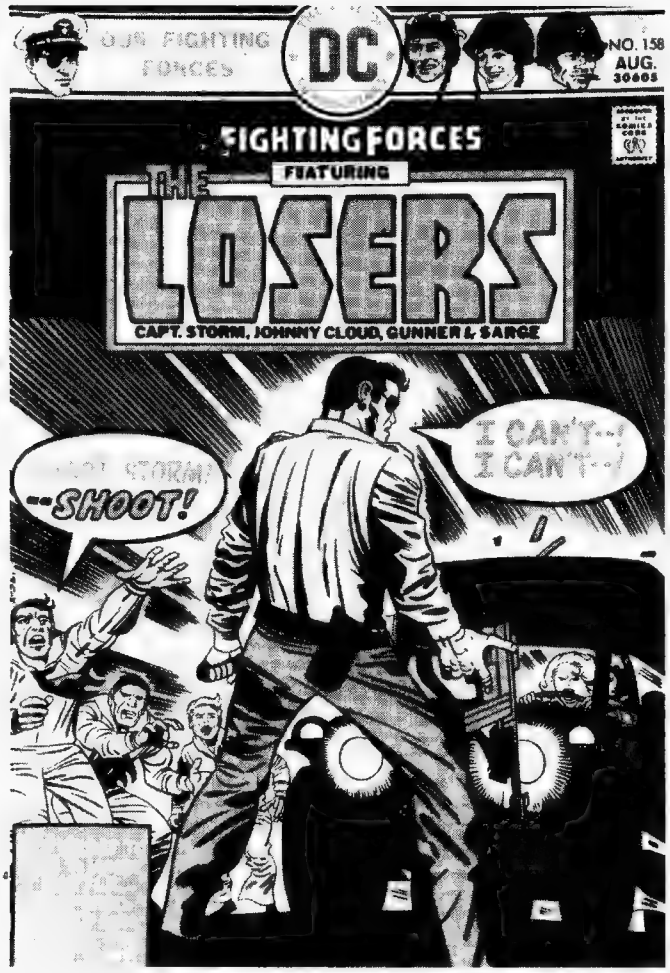
In 1970 Kirby left Marvel for DC. He took over the failing *Jimmy Olsen,* and created a whole new world of his own, the "Fourth World," including *New Gods, Mr. Miracle* and *Forever People.* He also created *Kamandi, The Demon* and *OMAC.*

In 1975 Kirby returned to Marvel. He once again picked up the reins of *Captain America* and took over a revived *Black Panther.* During his last stint at Marvel Kirby also produced *2001: A Space Odyssey,* its spin-off *Machine Man, The Eternals* and *Devil Dinosaur.*

Most recently, Kirby has been part of the Ruby-Spears team that has created the Saturday morning animated sword-and-sorcery hit, *Thundarr.* In 1981 he teamed up with independent publisher Pacific Comics for *Captain Victory,* and Eclipse Enterprises for *Destroyer Duck.*

Material for this historical perspective was gathered from The Steranko History of the Comics, Vol. 1, *by Jim Steranko, published in 1970 by Supergraphics, and* Kirby, *by Neal Kirby and David Folkman, published in 1975 by the Museum of Cartoon Art.*

In 1968 Marvel gave Captain America his own title—28 years after Simon and Kirby created the landmark character.



Some of Kirby's best work was done for war titles, such as DC's *Our Fighting Forces,* from the early 1970s.

hell. And I depicted that in the book. I had the heavyweight champ go up to Superman and he says, 'I don't feel like a champ next to you.' He didn't like Superman because there was no way he could beat him. Human beings do not like superior people.

"In fact, human beings love villains. It was the gangster movies that made the most money during the Depression years. Innately, we feel that we are not perfect—that you and I are going to make mistakes, and some of those mistakes are going to cost us. And we're going to have to take them in stride.

"My villains are people who are either taking the easy way out, or who have psychological flaws.

"People like villains because they know that inside us the villain lives. The villain is as valid as the hero. The villain is simply the other side of Superman. Superman can lapse into weakness. He can be betrayed, as Samson was. Samson *was* Superman and he was betrayed by a girl, because he liked women. There's no saying that Superman couldn't be betrayed by Lois Lane, or Jimmy Olsen, or anybody else he trusts.

"*Jimmy Olsen* was the only way that I could prove that I could make money for DC," Kirby explains. "On the *New Gods* [Fourth World] books, I was allowed to do what I wanted to do. I can't fault Carmine for that because that can be risky. If he had any trepidations at all, he didn't show them—but he had a right to have them."

Kirby feels that those books he did for DC were inspired; some of the best work that he's ever done. "I felt there was a time that a man had to tell a story in which he felt—not anybody else—in which *he* felt there was no bullshit. There was absolute turth.

"There was a scene in the *New Gods* . . . they pull the sea god out of the river, and he's dead [issue #4]. He's been killed by one of the evil gods. And Orion gives him a big funeral. He sets fire to the entire pier—he gives him a Viking's funeral. And, of course, Darkseid is around the corner and he watches it. But he knows the truth. He says: 'How heroes love to flaunt their nobility in the face of death. Yet they know better than most that war is but the cold game of the butcher.' And he's right. In a war there is no glamour.

"Darkseid never told a lie; he never deserted his son. When he meets this old man with his little grandson in Happyland, he says, when you're asleep and you have a nightmare, I'm the guy you're seeing—the other side of yourself. Because the other side of yourself is insecure. It's villainous, it's treacherous. And don't tell me that there may not come a time when, in considering your life against someone else's, you would betray him."

As significant as Kirby's Fourth World books might have been, they were short-lived. *Mister Miracle* ran for 18 issues, the *New Gods* 11 issues, *Forever People* 11 issues. But it was not because sales had fallen off. "They were in [DC's] top 10, I can assure you," Kirby says. As each title was killed, Kirby introduced new ones for the duration of his contract. These included *Kamandi, OMAC* and *The Demon.* "Carmine made no move to stop me from what I was doing, but when it came time to renew the contract, differences arose that couldn't be resolved.

MARVEL REVISITED & ON TO THE FUTURE

But there was a parting of the ways and Kirby was back at Marvel, this time with a little leverage—he was given creative control over *Captain America.* "Yes," he affirms, "in fact, I

(Continued on page 65)

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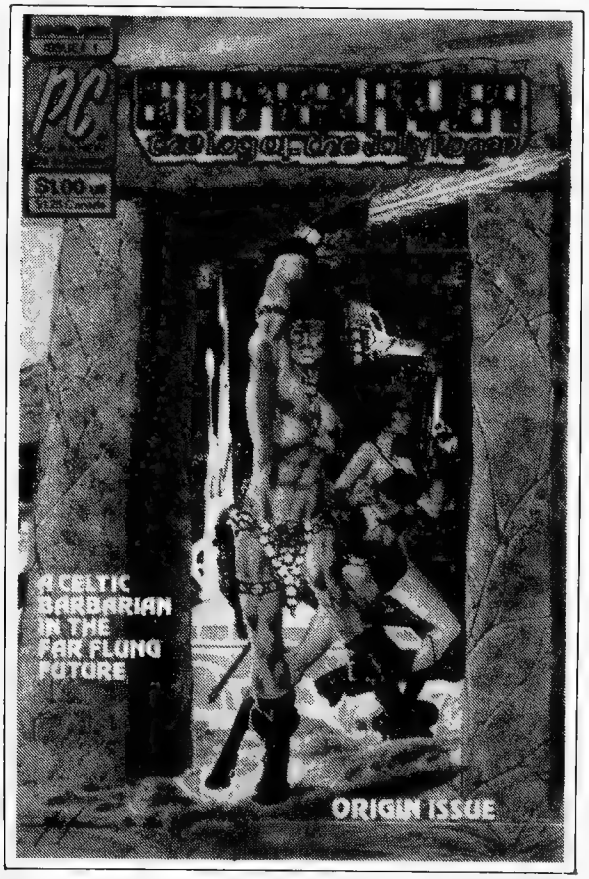

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SUPERHERO SCREENWRITERS

David and Leslie Newman have been exploring the cinematic possibilities of Superman and now, Sheena and the Shadow

By STUART MATRANGA

Picture this:

A formal ball in 1917, the year the great dream of American isolation and innocence was destroyed by the entrance of the United States into the brutal combat of World War One. An idealistic young man stands on the veranda. He has a vague sense that his destiny in life is to destroy the evil that lurks in men's hearts. His eyes gaze into the mystical shadows of the night, his back towards the gay, frivolous couples of 1917.

Cut to:

A grass hut in deepest, darkest Africa. An elderly woman, a shaman to her people, patiently coaxes a beautiful white girl in the ways of nature. This girl, her hair stunningly blonde, gapes in anticipation of the sacred knowledge the old witch doctor intends to reveal.

Cut to:

The Fortress of Solitude; even the name denotes its stark majesty, its isolated holiness. An emasculated Superman is drawn to the crystaline source of his former power. The world is under the thumb of his evil countrymen, and only he could have saved humanity. With his super powers gone, forfeited in the name of love, all hope seems futile. Until he sees the glowing green crystal on the ground.

Cut to:

An upper westside Manhattan apartment. The spacious rooms seem bare of all remarkable features except for the scattered movie posters on the walls and one room filled from floor to ceiling with books. The windows spy on Central Park and the feeling in the air is charged with the electricity of daydreams.

Though we sit in Leslie Newman's office, in the apartment she and her husband-partner, David, share, our minds wander into dark corridors, where reality is a figment of the imagination, and truth lives on a vast vista of shadow and light.

"The worst fight I ever had with my father was when I was 15 years old," Leslie Newman says. "I had been to two films that afternoon and planned to go to two more that night. And my father said, 'How can you waste your life like this!' And I hope I haven't."

David and Leslie Newman have been wasting their lives at the movies for some time now. This year alone they've virtually squandered themselves away by not only attending movies addictively, but also by writing *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle* and *The Shadow* respectively, and collectively, *Superman III.* In addition, David has rewritten the next Bette Midler film, *Jinx,* and is preparing to direct his own screenplay *Letters to Michael* in March.

"It's been a frantic year," Leslie understates.

Though success had touched the Newmans much earlier, when David, with Robert Benton, wrote *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967, it is *Superman* which swept them away towards fame, fortune and franticness.

Originally, it was David and Benton who came to rescue Mario Puzo's camp-mired script in 1977; Leslie was prepared to join her husband on the script for the possible sequel. However, Benton got the opportunity to direct his screenplay of *The Late Show* and left David and Leslie and a 40 year old alien from the planet Krypton to work things out.

"When we first got involved in *Superman,*" David recalls while puffing on a pipe and waving the smoke away from Leslie, "we went up to meet this fellow, Nelson Bridwell, who is this remarkable keeper of the archives at DC."

"Raider of the Lost Archives," Leslie interrupts. She sounds pleasantly like Margot Kidder's Lois Lane—especially when she says "Superman," dipping the first syllable and climbing back to the last.

"This guy knows everything," David continues. "When you want to know where Superman landed in the rocket ship when he came from Krypton he tells you the longitude, latitude, the day, the time."

"Without looking it up," Leslie adds.

"When you are sitting around as we were—this is way back on part one—you suddenly think, why is it that Kryptonite kills Superman anyway? There must be a reason that he is vulnerable to Kryptonite. Well, you pick up the phone and call this guy, Nelson Bridwell at DC, and he has you on the phone for a half hour giving you a chemistry lesson about the molecular structure of people from a planet with a red sun."

Despite the limitless resources of Mr. Bridwell, the Newmans felt free to insert their own interpretation of the Superman legend.

"Especially in the last few years, we found the comic book Superman to be incredibly mutable. They've changed that story about 500 times. They even redo the origin story every four years. For example, there was this thing called Kryptonite—this green stuff. They got stuck for plots and suddenly they made up red Kryptonite. One makes him tap dance and the other makes him not able to fly." David extends his arms for emphasis.

"This is the Stephen King school of horror writing," Leslie explains. "On Tuesday she levitates, on Wednesday blood comes out of her eyes. I always felt like it's cheating. There's got to be a certain set of rules. It isn't challenging if Superman can do everything."

"So we stopped worrying about what was in the comic and what was not."

"I must say," Leslie comments, "that we developed a principle way

PHOTO: JOHN CLAYTON

David and Leslie Newman find watching movies and writing scripts a wonderful way to live even if it is "like having homework your whole life."

back with Guy Hamilton [frequent James Bond director and original director of *Superman,* eventually replaced by Richard Donner] of approach to this kind of adventure thing. What you have to do, as Guy put it, is create an insoluable dilemma. He'd say, 'Create the most horrible, horrendous, impossible situation.' And we would write it. Then he'd say, 'Now give me the solution.' "

But, as our readers doubtlessly know, there is one seemingly insoluable dilemma Superman finds himself in during *Superman II.* We are led to believe that Superman has given up his powers in order to live a normal life with Lois Lane. After Zod, Non and Ursa take over the world, mild-mannered Clark Kent trudges over the arctic tundra to the Fortress of Solitude and he ultimately is restored to superhuman status.

"We are aware that we finessed that through the magic of the green crystal," David answers defensively.

"You have to believe in magic," Leslie insists.

"That is part of the fairy tale—that this green crystal is the Holy Grail, that that kiss can wipe her mind out like the water of Lathae." David is referring to another seemingly insoluable dilemma conveniently solved when Superman erases Lois' memory of their brief, but intense, love affair. "There is a certain amount of magic involved in it. Sure, we are aware that some people think it was a bit of a sly move, and we can't really say that it wasn't except that doesn't bother us. Superman had this calling to go to the green crystal—what Christopher [Reeve] calls 'the tube of Prell.' It's a force greater than Superman, although I don't like to use the word force—that's George Lucas' word. It's a thing. It is the atavistic connection between one galaxy and another, between one world and another. We gave it superpowers beyond anything. In any case, it won't be back in part three."

The Shadow in his heyday.

Nor will Lex Luthor hatch his nefarious schemes in part three. Superman will face a new set of enemies. They won't be extraterrestrials. They won't have superpowers. Yet they will be "worthy adversaries," promise the Newmans. "One is more of a rascal than the other three. He's more of a scamp, a scoundrel.

"When we finished part two everybody said 'How are you going to top this?' But we have topped it. Part three is going to be more spectacular." Leslie grins.

"Lois Lane has not been written out," David replies to the rampant rumors concerning the *Daily Planet*'s ace reporter. "She does not have a major role in this film because we felt we didn't have anything more to say about that relationship. At least for the time being."

Shooting begins on *Superman III* this summer and the release is sched-

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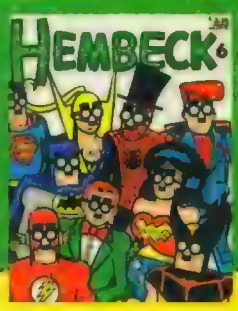

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PHOTO: ©1982 DC COMICS

Christopher Reeve as Superman, holding his "tube of prell" imbued with the stuff of magic and legend.

ART: COURTESY PAUL ARATOW

After going from studio to studio and writer to writer, Columbia has given *Sheena* the go-ahead and a major talent hunt for the title role is due to begin soon.

uled for the summer of 1983. Again, as in part two, Richard Lester will lead the production, using almost all the same crew. According to the Newmans, location scouts have already begun to scour Canada, searching for the perfect Smallville, Clark Kent's hometown, where much of part three will take place. This might indicate the reemergence of Lana Lang, briefly encountered in *Superman,* a long time rival of Lois Lane for Superman's affection. The Newmans, however, are obliged to stifle our curiosity for now. They adamanhly insist that there would be no appearance by Supergirl and "no Superboy, no Superdog, no Supermouse, no Supersofa."

"I don't want to denigrate the comic book," David says, "but there's none of that crap in it. The *Superman* people at DC trust us. If we made Superman gay, you can believe that you'd hear quickly from the DC Comics people. DC reads the script and must approve it. As long as you don't play fast and loose with Superman—have him played by Jerry Lewis. . . . We respect the myth. There's a lot more in part three having to do with the basically schizoid nature of this character, the split personality."

"When Sheena and the Shadow were first invented, audiences weren't nearly as sophisticated and weren't as interested in that. You could just have bang bang, pow pow and that was enough. Now, people want to know why he's like that or how Superman feels about the fact that he can't fall in love with a mortal person," Leslie says.

With the complex psychology of Superman becoming more of a factor in his personality, it is no surprise that Leslie has totally reinvented Lamont Cranston in her screenplay of *The Shadow.*

She has infused the mysterious evil fighter with a brooding, almost poetic, nature. She envisioned Leslie Howard, an actor revered for his sympathetic and almost feminine sensitivity, while she wrote her interpretation of the Shadow. Froyard's *Fantomas,* a silent French serial character (1912-1917) also helped summon "a darkly romantic, melodramatic world, full of calling cards, poison rings, secret passageways and figures in black, scaling walls."

These influences proved more of an inspiration that the infamous *Shadow* radio shows. "Radio is the opposite medium of film," Leslie says. "You had a guy in the radio show whose whole gimmick was that he was invisible. You can't do that in film."

To preserve a sense of mysticism, Leslie set *The Shadow* as far back as she could, in an age where "There was a willingness to believe in the possibility of clouding men's minds, which is an impossible concept. But if you set up a climate where people are ready to believe. . . ."

". . . I had very much the same kind of problems with *Sheena,*" David energetically interrupts. "I was given a bunch of comic books which were mostly useless. They were lousy comics. Sheena was a Tarzan rip-off. She was always really hot-looking because she was blonde and wore these neat abbreviated outfits. I was really intrigued by an insoluable set of problems: the whole notion of a white goddess in darkest Africa seems so out of touch with today, so racist and sexist, that I thought I'd like to see if I could work my way around that. I invented a whole new Sheena. She's an untouched, innocent virgin queen."

Instead of the klutzy Bob, David added a new hero for Sheena. He's a network TV reporter on assignment in Africa, who's the "essence of media hip cynicism" and who falls in love with this "apparition that drops out of the trees."

The love interest created a problem of how to make Sheena talk. "I didn't want her to sound like Tonto. She's raised by a shaman, a mother-earth magical witch woman. Sheena's voice is the shaman's. It's a careful, slightly stiff English. She doesn't have snappy dialogue."

"She's no Lois Lane," Leslie interjects.

"She's an avaricious pupil, always learning new words. She loves to learn new stuff."

"She has an eager quality."

Margo Lane, *the Shadow*'s main female character, is quite different. Leslie describes her in the screenplay

as "a young Katherine Hepburn. At 22 she's no longer gawky, just magnificently coltish, and as bright as she is beautiful.

"The first time he sees her," Leslie anxiously confides, "is at a ball in 1917, on the eve of war, where everybody's waltzing. It's all very decorative. And he goes out on the balcony and he looks down and there is a 16 year old girl in a white ball gown climbing the wall hand over hand."

David: "She's very frustrated by the fact that everyone thinks she's A) young and B) a girl and therefore limited in what she can do. Like Scarlett O'Hara, she always wants to be in the middle of it."

Leslie: "She says 'I don't just want to be an armpiece.' She has two purposes: 1) she wants to get in there and have that kind of fun and 2) she's madly in love with Lamont Cranston."

David: "But the Shadow doesn't know he's falling in love with her because he's getting over a very tragic romance to a woman who was killed by his arch-enemy. He's carrying a torch."

Leslie: "Which accounts for why he goes around brooding and being tormented and tortured."

The Newmans have collaborated on the *Superman* movies, and there is obviously a lot of consultation with each other on their solo works. "When I'm stuck, the first person I would call is Leslie." David says and Leslie feels the same way about him. They work in separate offices, but they make ample use of the phones when a problem comes up. They "take a lunch" once a week to discuss their writing.

So much professional cooperation has its drawbacks. As Leslie notes, "When somebody comes home at the end of the day you can ask them 'How was your day?' You don't already know the answer."

"But," as Leslie continues, "one of the nice things about writing screenplays as opposed to novels, is that you do not sit totally alone in a room for years. With film, you get feedback."

Their separate approaches to screenwriting reflect their individual work habits. David comes from journalism. He was an editor at *Esquire* in the early sixties. There he initiated such recurring themes as the annual Dubious Achievement Awards and the College issue. Following that, he and Robert Benton freelanced for every magazine on the racks, including a 10 year sting writing the "Man Talk" column for *Mademoiselle*. After years of rejection in the movie field, they finally sold *Bonnie and Clyde* and have both been making movies ever since. David thinks and talks fast, juggling concepts deftly, though with seeming recklessness. When he outlines a movie, it's usually with a magic marker on reams of brown paper tacked to his office walls.

Leslie, having raised their two kids and written a novel *(Gathering Force*—Simon & Schuster) writes 35 single spaced pages of treatment before she neatly composes a well-organized outline. She has a mother's and a novelist's patience.

The spunkiness of Lois Lane has been drawn from Leslie's retaliation against the attitude towards women in the 1950's, which affected her deeply.

"I couldn't have possibly written the Lois Lane of the fifties—that wimpy woman with the hats. The original Lois Lane, going back to 1938, was terrific, dynamite, a lot of pizzazz."

"Our take on Lois Lane," David adds, "was Rosaline Russell in *His Girl Friday*. She was a dynamo, and the best reporter on the paper."

"Lois Lane in the fifties was somebody who, you had the feeling, was just killing time. She just couldn't wait to give it all up for a picket fence and five kids. Or marry Superman. I couldn't relate to that. I don't think most women could relate to that anymore," Leslie says.

Despite their own intentions for their characters and stories, the Newmans, like all screenwriters, are at the mercy of a collaborative art form.

David: "Producers these days always think they have to be creative, whether they are or not. And there are actors who have opinions, which they didn't used to have in the thirties. But that's the way movies get made."

Leslie: "You learn ways of coping with that kind of thing. When an actor or a producer has a really awful idea you say things like, 'Mmmm, that's interesting. I think I'll give that a try.' And then you come back and say, 'Listen, I tried that and no matter what I did, it didn't work.' "

David: "Don't ever accept anything that anybody says in a meeting and don't reject it either. Just sit there and say, 'Let me think about that.' "

They write all day, often into the night, seven days a week. But writers never stop writing and these writers never seem to tire while talking about writing. If you stay long enough, they'll tell you about this wonderful screenplay for *Love Story II* that never got made, or turning down *Les Cage Aux Folies III* because enough was enough, or *Le Fete Amerique,* the first film they wrote together in Paris of 1975, or a *Tom and Jerry* movie that David prays Blake Edwards ("We saw *10* 10 times—that makes a hundred.") will direct. "It will be with real actors falling off cliffs and running through radiators," David's eyes widen with Chuck-Jones enthusiasm. Or maybe maybe maybe this very rough idea for *Superman IV.* Nah. Luckily, Leslie's father was not in the room to watch his daughter and her husband degenerate before his eyes.

Perhaps only Lawrence Kasdan, who wrote *The Empire Strikes Back, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Continental Divide* and *Body Heat,* has wasted his life away at the movies as much as the Newmans have recently.

Leslie leaned forward. "Did you read what Kasdan said in the *Times* last week?" She turned to her husband. "Well, he said, 'Having a writing career is like having homework your whole life.' "

David and Leslie looked at each other and laughed. ■

PHOTO: ©1982 DC COMICS

Politics, the Newmans claim, have nothing to do with Lois Lane's diminished appearance planned in *Superman III.*

Fandom

How To Get Your Letters Published

By BEPPE SABATINI

At one time or another, you've probably read a comic that was *so* good or *so* bad that you felt you just *had* to write the comic company a letter. And, if you did this, you more than likely waited months for your letter to appear, and were intensely disappointed when it didn't.

But then you see some people get dozens of letters printed, month after month, and you wonder, "How in the world do they do it?" Well, in this article I'm going to try and give you some of the tips I've picked up over the years.

The first and most important rule (of any kind of writing) is this: You must *write!* There are thousands of fans who shake their fist at an awful comic, and shout, "Someday I'll write!", and storm away as if they'd accomplished something. Don't just talk about it, do it! Sit down and write that letter, and don't give up. Your chances of being published with the average letter are about one in 10; if you stick with it and write 10 letters, you will be published. Don't wait to see if your first letter was published (about a five month wait) before writing your second one. *Keep writing, and don't give up.*

What should your letter look like? Does it have to be typed? Typing improves tremendously the chances of your letter being published, just because it makes it so much easier to read. It will be taken out of the pile first, and read first, and your letter will look and sound a little more intelligent than the handwritten one. Bad typing is no better than handwriting, of course. Two or three mistakes on a page are okay; it'll be retyped anyway. Your typing should be double-spaced, on one side of the page, with an inch of margin all around. Your ribbon should be fresh enough to produce dark lettering. If you don't know how to type, it's definitely not worth the extra time it takes to hunt and peck.

Your name and address should be included on the body of the letter; the envelopes are thrown away immediately. The name should be your real name; some writers such as the Mad Maple have done very well using a pseudonym, but in general letters of this kind are considered synonymous with crank letters.

Don't just put "Marvel Comics Group" on the envelope; use the name of the letter column or the comic (either is OK) and then C/O (care of) Marvel Comics Group, and so on. If you put more than one letter in an envelope (which I strongly recommend) list the comics or column titles on the envelope, on the lower left hand corner.

Sometimes you will notice that editors ask you to send postcards. Don't do it. I've had such bad luck with postcards that I think the companies just plain lose the things.

If you are female, or married, or in college, make this clear in your return address, even if you don't ordinarily do so. For example, instead of:

Chris Jacobs
244 Clinton Street
Metropolis, N.Y. 10022

write this:

Mrs. Christina Jacobs
244 Clinton Street
Metropolis State University
Metropolis, N.Y. 10022

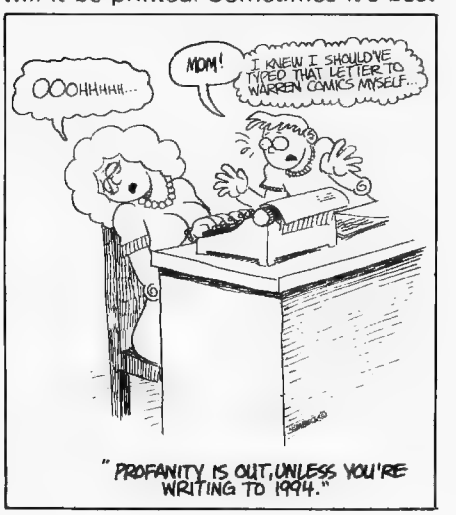
The letter with the second address is much more likely to be printed; the publishers always enjoy giving the impression that their audience is well educated, older, and so on. But don't lie about this stuff.

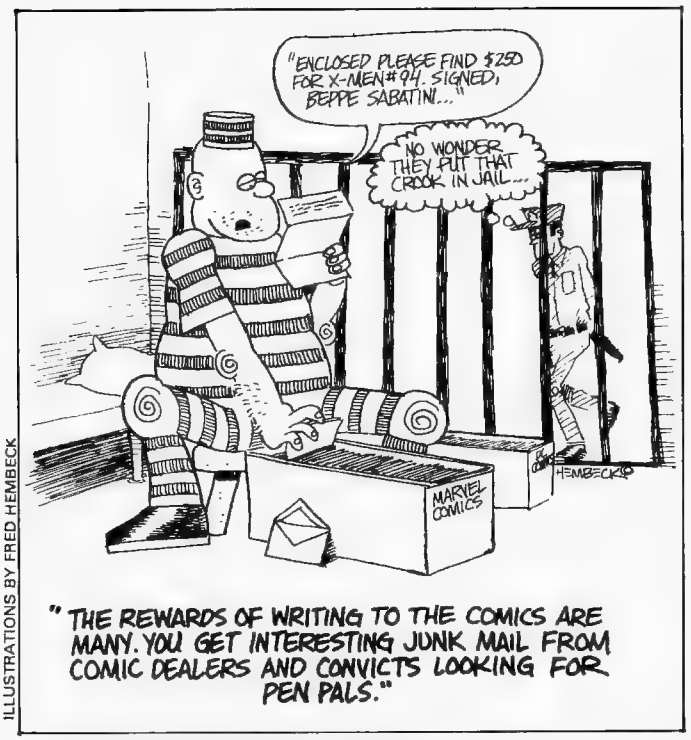
Use the personal letter form that was taught to you in school. Your salutation can be just about anything, but I always used to put both the editor's and the assistant editor's name (e.g.—"Dear Julie and Nelson,") as a small courtesy, since the assistant editor is often the only person to read the letter. It's also a good idea to mention the title and issue number of the comic you're writing about in the first paragraph or two, just for the sake of clarity. Keep a Xerox copy for your own reference.

Make your letter distinctive. Use colored paper, draw pictures on the envelope, put in newspaper clippings or cartoons. If you or your little brother went out for Halloween dressed up as Wolverine, drop a snapshot of that in there. They won't print it, but they will get an awful kick out of it; and they're much more likely to remember your name. And once they start remembering your name, your odds improve from one in 10 to about one in three.

Now the most important question of all: What do you say in the letter? No secret here; you just tell them your honest opinion of the comic, the writing and the artwork. Since you tend to see so many favorable letters printed in the comics, you may think you should write only praise; this isn't the case. If you write only rave letters, the editors won't have much respect for your opinions and will print them only when they're desperate. Never praise an unworthy comic just to try and get your letter printed.

Conversely, when you're writing critical mail, be civilized. Be courteous. Be diplomatic. You are writing to people about their livelihood, and thoughtless rudeness will not convince them to improve their style, nor will it be printed. Sometimes it's best





"THE REWARDS OF WRITING TO THE COMICS ARE MANY. YOU GET INTERESTING JUNK MAIL FROM COMIC DEALERS AND CONVICTS LOOKING FOR PEN PALS."

"...RICHARD AND WENDY PINI EVENTUALLY GOT MARRIED AFTER THEY MET EACH OTHER THROUGH THE LETTER COLUMN OF THE SILVER SURFER."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRED HEMBECK

to soften the blow with euphemisms like "not entirely successful" or "not up to your usual standards."

Don't confuse the work with the creator; don't write "Beppe Sabatini is a jerk" on the basis of this article, for example—you've never met me.

Be original. Find some new way to make the same old compliments and complaints. A letter from Galactus or Jonah Jameson commenting on a comic is very likely to be printed. Finding a new format to write often gets you printed, as well—for example, a letter modeled after a restaurant review, or a wine tasting. A future historian discovers this comic; what does he think of it? How would the *New York Times Book Review* handle this issue?

Be specific. Don't just write, "It was good, I liked it. It was a good comic." Say, rather, "Frank Miller uses innovative and effective layouts, and benefits from the influence of Will Eisner and Gil Kane." It will make your letters more interesting and will help the artists and writers know exactly what to change and what to leave alone.

Don't try to use a lot of big words, pompous language, or affected intellectualism. This is usually just a smoke screen to conceal the writer's embarassment about liking comics. And don't try to write in '60s Marvelese—that is, "hang loose," "Peerless Pilgrim," "Excelsior," "true believer." Almost everybody is tired of that stuff by now. Profanity is out, unless you're writing to *1994.* Swear words will immediately get you dismissed as a crank, and your letter will be quickly thrown away.

Try and be whimsical, funny or light-hearted sometimes. It can get awfully dull working in a mail room, and a humorous note might just jump out of the stacks. Keep it short and concise; one page is usually enough.

Be well informed. It's not always possible, but keep up with the fan zines; you can appreciate and comment much more perceptively when you have some idea of what went into a comic. For example, a recent *Star Wars* comic was really a reworked John Carter of Mars story. *The New X-Men* will soon have published more issues than the originals. "The Shrieker," a new villain in the recent *World's Finest,* is Gerry Conway's response to the infamous Ellison interview in *TCJ.* This kind of background information can add richness and color to your letters.

Find boo-boos. It's an old letter column tradition, and rather than just being nit-picking, it helps keep the pros from getting too sloppy. You can usually find an error in logic, science or continuity in almost every issue.

And, as mentioned earlier, the companies like to present a favorable image of their readership; so if you're a teacher, a clergyman, an honor student or even a parent, casually mention it in your letter.

Okay, then, who do you write to? Almost everyone decides to write to *Teen Titans* or *X-Men,* and you probably will, too. Go ahead if you like; but these comics get *a lot* of mail, and while your letter will be read, the chances of it getting printed are pretty slim.

Of course, getting printed is not the only thing that's important; making your views known and giving the creative personnel some feedback should also be your goal. But if you're desperate to get a letter printed, if you just *have* to see your name in print before you write one more letter; then you can be almost assured of being published if you write to one of the following:

**House of Mystery*
**Weird War Tales*
**Unknown Soldier*
**Sgt. Rock*
**Jonah Hex*
**G.I. Combat*

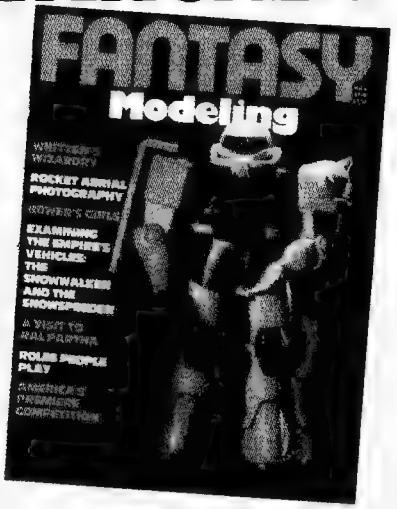
Now, before you write *me* a lot of angry letters, I can just guess what you're going to say: I don't read those comics! I don't even like them! and a lot of comic book shops don't even carry them!

Well, of course, that's the whole point. These comics rarely get more than a handful of mail, sometimes none at all. Some of them even offer prizes as an inducement to get their readers to write. The odds of your placing a letter here are very good; say, 50 to 80 percent.

You'll also be surprised at the amount of high-quality material you'll find to write about in these comics. "Enemy Ace" by John Severin, "Bat Lash" by Dan Spiegle, and "Captain Fear" by Simonson have all appeared in these books lately.

Perhaps more importantly, many of the people working in these titles are breaking into the business, and this is their training ground. These people are very anxious to get some response, still very interested in refining their craft, and very receptive to suggestions and criticism. *Sgt. Rock* usually has wonderful back-ups by the students of Kubert's School of Comic Art. Cary Burkett has been writing brilliant scripts for "Dateline: Frontline,"

EXPERIENCE THE FANTASY



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virtually unnoticed, for about three years now. Follow some of these people and you'll be among the first fans to "discover" upcoming new talent (Michael Golden and Frank Miller both came up through these books while I was letter-writing.)

The rewards of writing letters to the comics are many. You get interesting junk mail from comic dealers and convicts looking for pen-pals. You start to make a small name for yourself and people begin to recognize it at conventions. (I've been nominated as a co-star for *DC Presents* and have even been suggested for my own series, *Sabatini, Fan Without Fear.)* The record-holder, as far as I know, is Mike White, of Makinaw, Illinois, with 136 letters published.

If you're lucky, you might even win one of the legendary No-Prizes. Bill Mantlo seems to be the only person to still mail out the prizes, so you might want to hit him a little harder with your mistake-finding. I don't know if I should give this away, but if you finally win one, you get an elaborate envelope announcing, "Congratulations! Your No-Prize is enclosed!" and, of course, the envelope is empty.

And, if you're *very* lucky, there are a few more benefits that might come your way. You might find your name creeping into the stories as a little in-joke (I was in *Spider-Woman* #21 and *Superman Family* #210.) You may get advance copies of new titles, so that your letters can appear in the first issue. Marty Pasko and many others began their comic careers with extensive letter writing. And Richard and Wendy Pini of *Elfquest* fame, eventually got married after they met each other through the letter column of the *Silver Surfer.*

One thing you probably won't get is a personal response from the artists and writers. I wrote over 400 letters and I don't think I got more than one postcard back in response. But if the editors decide to print your letter, you *do* get a form-letter-style postcard from DC about half the time.

And another annoying thing you may notice is that your letters never seem to have much of an effect. The pros are sensitive to the mail, but usually try to respond to a consensus rather than individual letters. Again, I can only think of one suggestion of mine which was carried out (the *Mr. and Mrs. Superman* series.)

But when they do print that letter, and when they do take that suggestion, the thrill is overwhelming. When you see your first letter in print you'll almost pass out from the excitement. Marvel has just started two-page letter columns in many of their comics, so the time has never been better to start on a letter-writing binge. Go for it! And I'll see you in the letters pages! ■

Some Favorite Letters

Dear Mr. Hall,
I very much enjoyed the issue of Spider-Man that featured the Not-Ready-for-Prime-Time Players. My only regret is that I could not appear in it myself, but unfortunately, as you know, I am dead.
Sincerely, yours,
Generalissimo Francisco Franco
Madrid, Spain

From *Marvel Team-Up* #80

Dear Al and Paul,
HOW NICE . . . that I finally got to see a full-length Legion story (#237) with almost every member in action.
WHAT A SHAME . . . that it was released before the tabloid, which had the same definite assets.
HOW NICE . . . that Walt Simonson drew the whole 34-page story.
WHAT A SHAME . . . that he only inked a few spaceships and aliens.
HOW NICE . . . that we got an old-fashioned, Gardner Fox-JLA type script.
WHAT A SHAME . . . that the villain was so dull, and his motivation so vague.
HOW NICE . . . that we got such an inspiring, renewal of life style ending.
WHAT A SHAME . . . that you didn't make it too clear in the first place that the Graxis didn't have a sun!
HOW NICE . . . that R.J. Brande finally got himself a personality; and a likeable, noble one at that.
HOW NICE . . . that personality came across in a double-twist ending, the old "one-two" that leaves us reeling.
HOW NICE . . . that Jim Starlin is going to do an issue, which could well be the best since #200.
All in all, I'd say you came out ahead! How nice!
Beppe Sabatini
133 Durand St. Apt. 5
East Lansing, MICH 48823

From *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes* #242

COMICS SCENE EXCLUSIVE

Carl Barks

At long last, a quality volume will properly display the talents of this long-neglected comic writer/artist

By DAVID HUTCHISON

To readers of these pages the name Carl Barks is certainly a familiar one, and to more than a few of you the name is revered as well. His name should instantly conjure visions of ducks (Uncle Scrooge, Donald and the boys) on journeys of high adventure anywhere in the world and even outer space. But to the general public he is an unknown—that is, his *name* is unknown—his stories have been read, loved and treasured by millions; they have been reprinted in countless editions and many languages for nearly 40 years!

Let me throw a few more statistics at you. Today, Barks' stories are published in 11 or 12 different countries in nine different languages. Monthly, the average Disney comic book circulation (not every book has a Barks story, but he usually averages 80%), on a world-wide basis, amounts to around 20,000,000 copies. That's just the circulation. Now, how many people read those copies? A Disney licensing executive estimates that three to six people read each comic. So, let's be conservative and take three people—that's 60,000,000 people a month who read a Carl Barks story, probably written 25 years ago! Can you think of another writer/artist in the 20th century that has a following like that?

In recent years a few "Barks books" have appeared with reprints of a few of the stories. From Abbeville Press are hardbound editions of *Uncle Scrooge* and *Donald Duck* that sell inexpensively for about $19 each. These editions, however, have been re-edited to fit an over-size page; there are panels missing and out of order, the lettering is not Barks' own and the coloring leaves much to be desired. They are, however, a good way to obtain 20 Barks stories. Collector's shops sell the rare original comic books for many hundreds of dollars, when you can find them. There have also been some trade paperback reprints.

Following in the wake of these tentative efforts, though, is big news from Celestial Arts, a small publisher located in California. Eleven Uncle Scrooge "tales of imagination and high adventure" by Carl Barks with a brand new Scrooge story created especially for this book are being collected in a hardbound deluxe edition book.

The production values of the book are astounding. There are 376 pages, printed on 100-pound glossy stock and smythe sewn-in signatures. The book

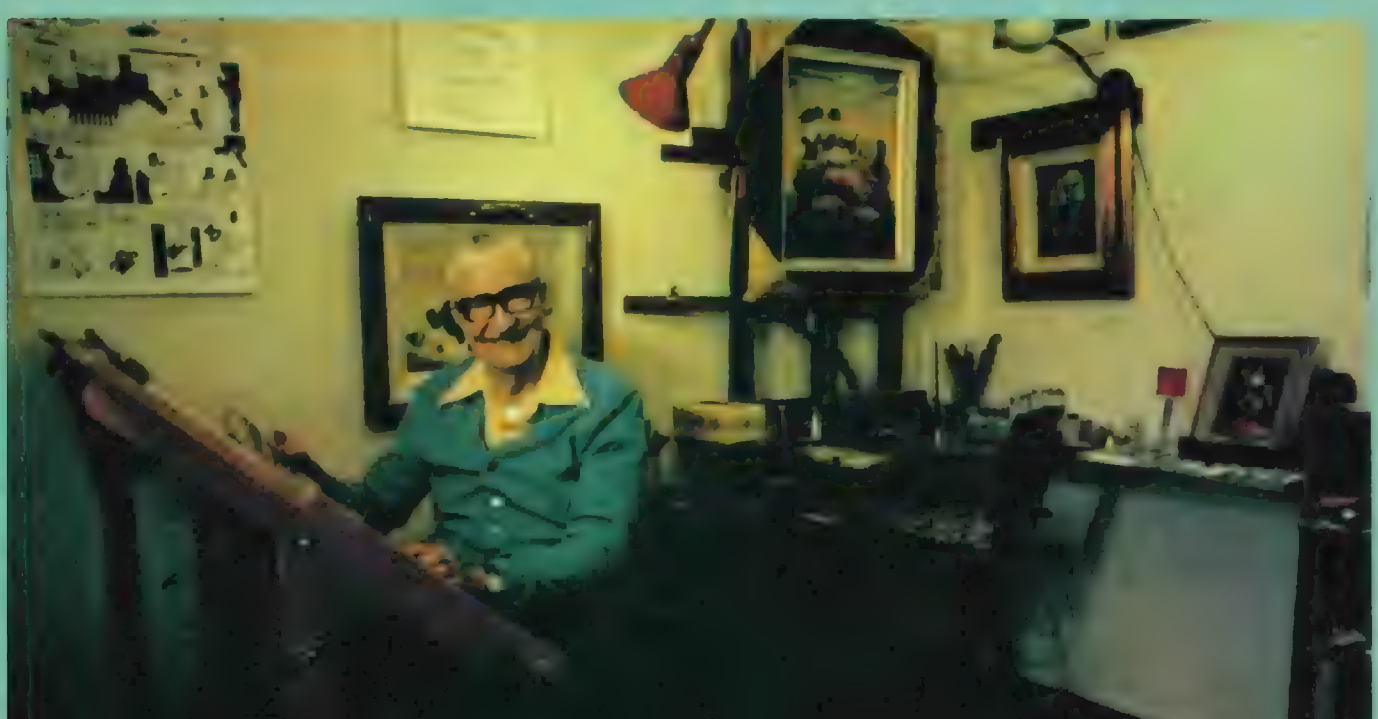

PHOTO: MICHAEL SULLIVAN

Carl Barks is famous for his more than 25 years of highly imaginative adventures with Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge.

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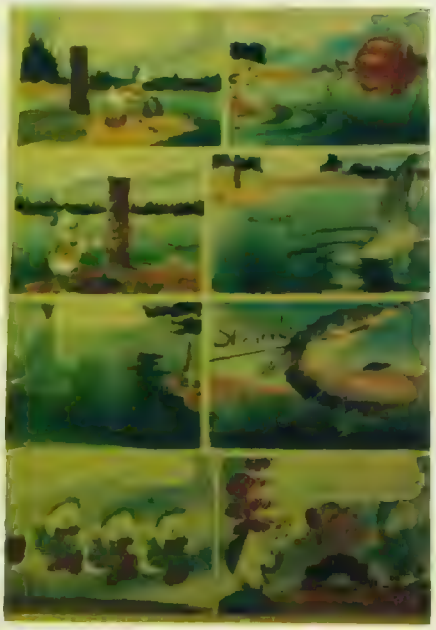

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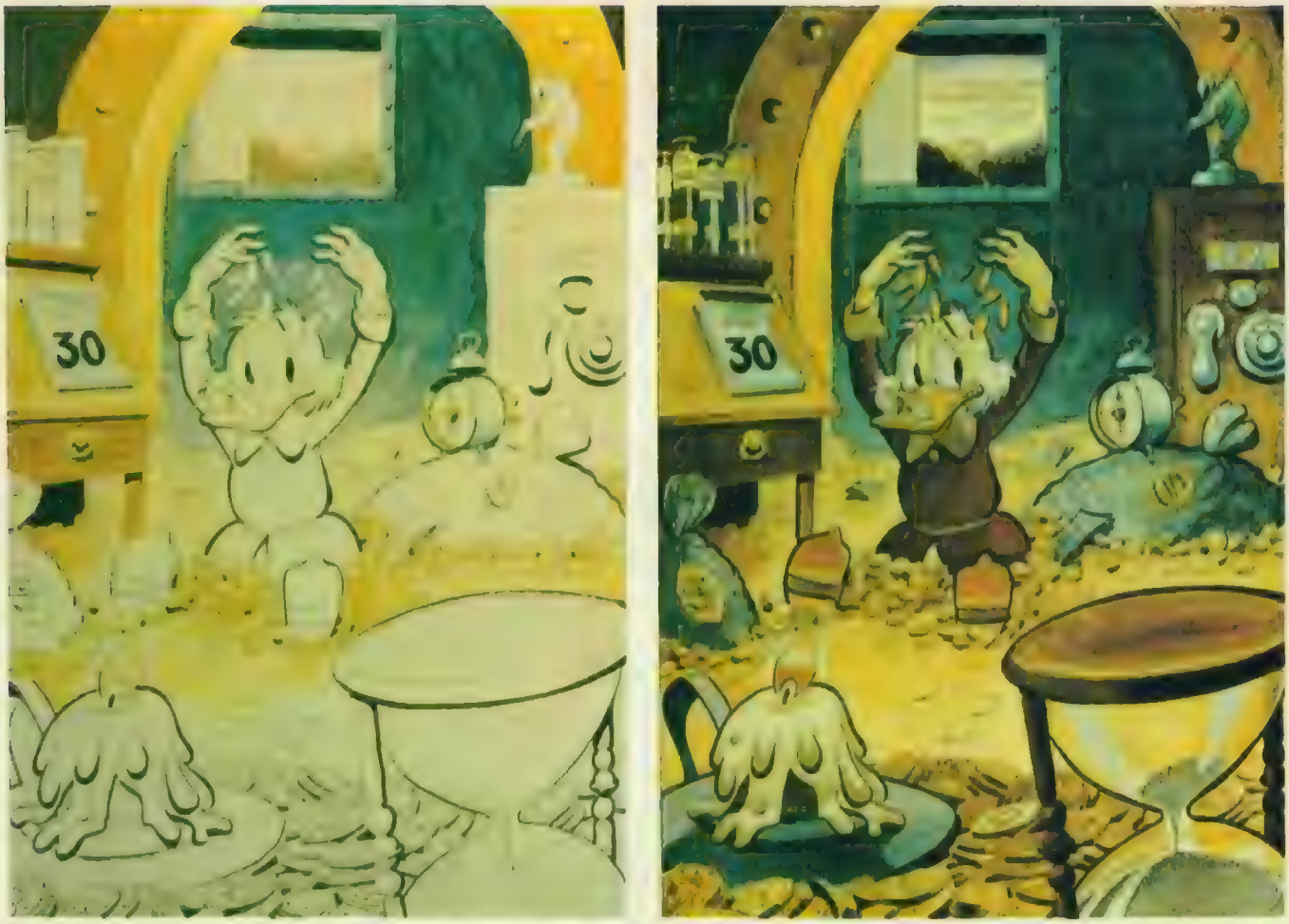
The Colorist's Art

1. Australian artist Peter Ledger adds individual details with a fine brush. He spend six months air brushing and hand brushing color into the Barks panels; the 16,000 duck feet required painstaking care. 2. Masking material is laid over the foreground, so that backgrounds, usually sky, earth and water can be airbrushed in. 3. One color has been completed. 4. The masking material removed leaving foreground untouched. 5. Remaining colors are added either by handbrush or further applications of masking and airbrush. 6. All colors completed, the black line art has been laid over the coloring. This sequence is one page from the story "Land of the Pygmy Indians." Right: The opening page from "Land Beneath the Ground!" showing before and after the addition of the final black plate. The four color printer's plates are made from Ledger's colored blue line and a fifth plate of the black line lettering and line art is added in the printing process. Next page top: A clearer look at the art work before and after the black line art is over laid. Special printing inks have been used to capture the full vibrancy of Ledger's coloring, especially for such brilliant reds as the plane in the top panel. The reproductions on these pages do not

do justice to the art as it will appear in the book, since these illustrations are taken from photographs of the originals and have been printed in a standard magazine press with standard inks. bottom: Carl Barks checks a page from "Land of the Pygmy Indians" with artist Peter Ledger.

PHOTO: CHRISTY MARX

MICHAEL SULLIVAN PHOTOS: A SCENE FROM "THE MEN WHO MADE THE MOVIES" A FILM SUPPORTED BY A GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS, A FEDERAL AGENCY IN WASHINGTON, D.C. ©1975 EDWARD SUMMER



From "Go Slowly Sands of Time," a new story created for *Uncle Scrooge McDuck: His Life and Times*, these two illustrations show some of the steps required to produce an "official" Barks painting.

is approximately nine by 12 inches and weighs seven pounds. The stories appear exactly as Barks drew them and, in some cases, are published, uncut and in proper panel sequence for the first time. ("Back to the Klondike" for example, suffered at the hands of editors when it first appeared and it has never appeared as Barks originally drew it.) Australian artist Peter Ledger has completely recolored the panels under Barks' personal supervision. Additionally, there is a hand-tipped, personally autographed lithograph of a newly created Barks oil painting of Scrooge and Donald.

There is something of a story behind the famous and infamous Duck oil paintings that Barks created for some years. The editor of the Barks book and the driving force behind its creation, Ed Summer, tells the story.

"From time to time over the years, Carl Barks created full oil pantings of the Duck characters that he had drawn for so many years. Well, back about 1975 some not-too-clear thinking fellows decided to do everybody a 'favor' and print a poster of one of Mr. Barks' paintings. They sold very well. These entrepreneurs decided after the sale to send Mr. Barks some money . . . and to send some money to Walt Disney Productions. Of course, Barks was surprised and shocked; furthermore, the studio didn't appreciate the unauthorized sale of their copyrighted characters. Because of this Barks was asked by the studio not to do anymore paintings, which the studio had permitted him to do for a number of years. Because of this book, the studio gave permission for Barks to do not only a brand new story, but a brand new oil painting. A lithograph of the painting is restricted to 5,000 numbered and signed copies and is available only with the purchase of this limited edition book. The lithograph is printed on acid-free paper and has a guaranteed shelf life of over a century."

Barks poses with one of his famous Duck oil paintings.

The few paintings that are in "circulation" have brought prices as high as $40,000 each at a recent auction.

How, you may wonder, can an artist be so famous and so unknown at the same time? Summer explains, "The publishing system that existed between 1940 and 1960 was essentially an anonymous system. It was true of all of the publishers—it was true of Marvel, DC and it was true of Dell. Everybody worked anonymously. There was no conspiracy. The publishers were not trying consciously to keep the writers hidden . . . it's just the way it was done until Stan Lee made the writer and the artist part of the promotion of the package."

But even unsigned, the distinctive Barks story and art style was easy to recognize. "You just knew there was

something different about the stories," says Summer. That "something different" made *Walt Disney Comics and Stories* one of the best selling comic books of all time. "In the 50s when Carl was doing stories for *W.D.C. & S.*, it sold 3,000,000 copies a month. Which, to my knowledge makes it the second best selling comic book of all time. At that time *Captain Marvel Adventures* was the best seller at 1½ million copies a *week*. The mainstay of *W.D.C.&S.* was the Carl Barks Duck story . . . and the Floyd Gottfriedson Mickey Mouse serial—another great underrated artist/writer.

"I think a gentleman over at *Newsweek* put it very well when he said that if Carl Barks were allowed to sign his work, he would probably be the best known cartoonist in the world—in the same way that Al Capp and Walt Kelly were. If I can add my own summation, I think he would be better known than Charles Schultz, who is certainly the best known, now."

Summer has long believed that comic books are a vastly underrated medium. "Comic books have always gotten a bad rap," sighs Summer, "because they are a popular medium. Certainly, there is as much junk in comic books as there is in any other art form. Take popular music, for example, the Beatles have had enormous impact far beyond what is usually played on the radio; but some group, like The Slimey Warts is not going to be remembered tomorrow.

"The comic strips have a similar situation. Look at *Prince Valiant* by Hal Foster. There are over 2,000 pages of finely wrought drawing, thoroughly researched and readily comparable to the pen and ink art of the Renaissance masters. It's a massive body of work; taken as a whole, Hal Foster wrote and illustrated a 2,000-page historical romance. There is no work in any language in any period of history to equal its magnitude.

"Carl Barks did, I would conservatively estimate, about 10 pages a month, every month for 25 years. That's 3,000 pages of Ducks and three or four hundred stories. As short stories, that matches the output of any of the great short story writers. I think Barks' stories are as enduring as anything that Hans Christian Anderson wrote. They are a uniquely American idiom, which is as unique as what the Brothers Grimm did in the Germanic idiom. Of course, we will have to wait at least another 50 years to see if later generations will feel the same way.

"Interestingly, the Italians, Germans and French seem to have a greater appreciation for the comic strip form than the American publishers do. It is eminently clear to me that Winsor McKay is a genius by anybody's standards, but no American publisher would touch a book about him. In order for there to be a book of his collected work, in the United States, there first had to be an Italian edition, then a German, then a Swedish edition . . . finally there was an English edition, but it was only after the translated foreign editions sold well."

In 1975, Summer began a film project with a grant from National Endowment for the Arts. It is called "The Men Who Made the Comics" and is designed to highlight a number of people who have contributed to what Summer calls "mainstream literature."

"When I was making the film, I was staying at George Lucas' house and using the production office. *Star Wars* was just starting. I told Gary Kurtz, the producer, that I was going down to see Carl Barks. He asked me if I would mind taking something down for Carl to sign. So the next day he gave me "Only A Poor Old Man" and "The Sheriff of Bullet Valley." It was then that I found out how much Gary really likes Carl's work. Gary has an amazingly detailed memory for the Duck stories and can recall all sorts of fine details, plots and gags.

"Sometime later after the *Star Wars* heat was off Gary, he began to show an active interest in my idea for a Duck book."

A number of American publishers were approached, but Kurtz decided his own company would publish the book and he personally financed it. Of Carl's work Kurtz says, "Carl's Duck stories were at the very top, uniquely full of adventure, imagination and humor." George Lucas, too, expresses his appreciation to Carl in a special introduction for the book.

"The Disney Studios have been incredibly cooperative and with David Smith's help in the Disney archives, I was able to find some of the material that Barks worked on while he was at Disney," Summer says.

Eleven stories were selected for the book. Summer explains the selection process. "First, it was decided to do only Uncle Scrooge stories. Then it was decided to restrict the stories to ones that appeared in *Uncle Scrooge* comics. The 10 page stories that appeared in *W.D.C.&S.* show a different side of Scrooge's character, which is interesting and wonderful, but the stories that appeared in *Uncle Scrooge*—longer, more complicated—are clearly stories that Carl put more time and effort into. Then Carl and I went through the stories and all of the published books to delete those stories that had been previously republished. We came up with a list of 35 stories that were not included in other collections. We trimmed that to 11. The stories selected are presented in chronological order, hence the title of the book: *Walt Disney's Uncle Scrooge McDuck: His List and Times* by Carl Barks. It begins with the story of Scrooge's youth ("Back to the Klondike") and concludes with "Go Slowly Sands of Time," a new and perhaps final story.

"Intrinsic to the concept of this book is that it is a storybook. We wanted it to be the kind of book that people will pick up to read and enjoy the stories." Summer and his staff have certainly gone to a lot of trouble to make the package as attractive as they think it deserves to be. A great deal of effort has gone into the coloring of the story panels. Australian artist Peter Ledger worked with airbrush, hand brush, and pencil to make the coloring equal to the skilled Barks line drawing. The illustrations in this article show artist Ledger at work on some of the hundreds of color pages that make up the book. The detail of the coloring is fully consistent with the detail of Barks' drawing. Barks was a meticulous researcher, drawing heavily on *National Geographic* and *Encyclopedia Brittanica* to detail his stories. Look at the desert panels, for example—that isn't just any kind of cactus. There must be 25 different kinds of real cacti in this story, drawn from pictures of the real plants. There is barrel cactus, bayonet cactus, prickly pear with flowers . . . .

In addition to the stories, there is a biographical essay written by Mike Barrier, the "official" Barks biographer (he has written a full-length biography of Barks), and a series of interviews by the editor of the book, Ed Summer. "The interviews are really anecdotal in nature and cover three aspects of Barks' life and work: First, his recollections of the development of a story idea and the references he used; second, reflections on the technique of writing a story, some of it fairly technical and interesting, particularly his ideas about gag construction; and thirdly, some personal reminiscences."

All in all the Summer book is a very special work, a storybook collection of tales of imagination and high adventure from one of the most beloved and widely read writer/artists of any century, Carl Barks. ■

Walt Disney's Uncle Scrooge McDuck: His life and Times by Carl Barks may be ordered from your local comics dealer or directly from the publisher: Celestial Arts, 231 Adrian Road, Millbrae, Ca 94030. The publisher's price is $130 till February 28, $159.95 after March 1. Local dealers may set their own prices.

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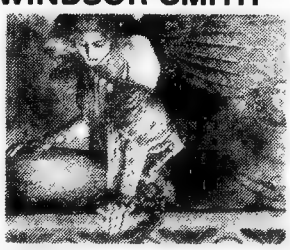

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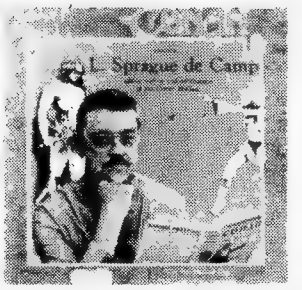

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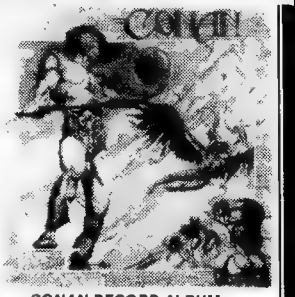

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ECLIPSE RISING

A look at an alternative form of comic publishing and the man who made it happen

By ROBERT GREENBERGER

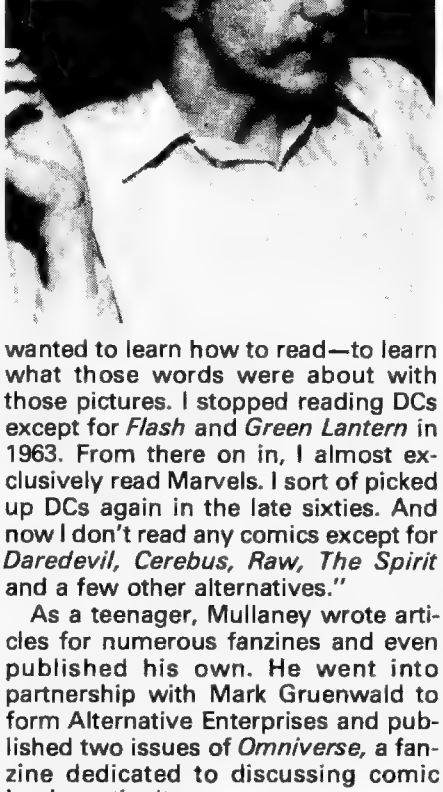
In the 1960s a generation of dissatisfied comic readers began writing and drawing their own brand of comics, cruder in appearance than Marvels or DCs but much broader in scope. These "underground" comics became a symbol of the hippie era.

The 1970s gave another generation of dissatisfied comic readers a chance to publish their own stories. This time, however, the result was more of a cross between the freedom of the underground comix and the style of the superhero "above ground" comics. These books have been called either "ground-level" or "alternative press" comics.

Many such attempts at alternative press publications have met with only limited success. Mike Friedrich's *Star*Reach* magazines, for example, were loved by the fans and professionals but Friedrich couldn't keep them profitable or on schedule. Today, there are over a dozen different ground-level publications including the recently released *Fantasy Illustrated* and *Adventure Illustrated,* and the long-running *Cerebus the Aardvark.* These magazines use the talents of many comic professionals and serve as a testing ground for new fan talent.

Perhaps the most successful blend of fan and professional publishing has been Eclipse Enterprises. As they enter their fifth year, plans have been made to expand the number and type of magazines they publish, designed to insure a good-sized piece of the marketplace. Eclipse and its publisher, Dean Mullaney, are ready to give discriminating comic fans what they want.

As a child, Mullaney, like most other comic fans, read whatever he could get his hands on and claims, "Dick Sprang taught me how to read. I saw those large blenders and toasters he drew in the *Batman* comics and



wanted to learn how to read—to learn what those words were about with those pictures. I stopped reading DCs except for *Flash* and *Green Lantern* in 1963. From there on in, I almost exclusively read Marvels. I sort of picked up DCs again in the late sixties. And now I don't read any comics except for *Daredevil, Cerebus, Raw, The Spirit* and a few other alternatives."

As a teenager, Mullaney wrote articles for numerous fanzines and even published his own. He went into partnership with Mark Gruenwald to form Alternative Enterprises and published two issues of *Omniverse,* a fanzine dedicated to discussing comic book continuity.

"Around 1976-77, when I became dissatisfied with what I was reading, I was concerned with the continuity," Mullaney explains. "I thought it was a very important, maybe *the* most important element in comics, the thing that made them [Marvel] different from the other comics that I had read. Things made sense in the Marvel Universe. Things were logical in that context. *Omniverse* was an attempt to do a mental exercise of sorts. Then things got so diffuse that I lost interest in the continuity. Continuity in the Marvel universe died around 1976. I didn't like the comics I was reading anymore. It was a gradual change but I couldn't get that fanaticism up anymore."

It was at that time when Mullaney was leaving comics behind him that a new opportunity presented itself. "I had met people like Don McGregor, Steve Gerber and others at conventions. One evening I was over at Don's apartment and on the wall was a pencilled drawing of a character who looked a lot, to me, like Jimi Hendrix. Being a musician I asked Don what it was. It was by Paul Gulacy and was his original character conception of Sabre."

McGregor was looking for a publisher to do the Sabre story which he considered much different than the standard superhero and monster fare of the time. That night Mullaney went home thinking about this black, independent adventurer, and his thoughts began turning to publishing the story himself. He spoke with his older brother Jan, a studio musician who has toured with Bad Co., and they decided to put together a publishing company and produce their own comics. Jan would put up the money while Dean would edit and publish. At the time, Dean thought it would only cost $2,000 to produce the book.

"Don and I sat down and decided on a format for the comics because we were both dissatisfied with the four-color newsprint process using plastic plates," Mullaney says. "The standard practice in the industry at the time was to set the price for the book based on what readers would be willing to pay and then decide from that what to pay

Above: Eclipse publisher Mullaney. Opposite: Paul Gulacy's painting for one of the Sabre mini-series' covers.

CHARACTERS: ©1982 DON McGREGOR & PAUL GULACY ART: ©1982 PAUL GULACY

ART: ©1982 CARL POTTS

ART: ©1982 STEVE GERBER

Top left is the art for the cover to *Eclipse* #4 by Carl Potts and top right is *Stewart the Rat* by Steve Gerber and Gene Colan.

the writers and artists. We decided how much it would cost to pay the writer and an artist a good sum and what it would cost us to get quality printing. We realized that would cost a lot of money and we set the price of *Sabre* accordingly. It was $6 and the distributors at the time told us we were crazy."

Were they? Well, not if you consider that the first printing of 5,000 copies sold out. Three months later, in January, 1979, a second printing was available.

Mullaney thought Eclipse would be a one shot and that *Sabre* would be the beginning and end of the line. Then Craig Russell called and asked if Eclipse would be interested in printing his latest book. Mullaney agreed and, soon after, *Night Music* appeared to enthusiastic reviews and sales. By then, Mullaney knew the time was right for such an alternative operation to keep on going.

McGregor, a good friend of Mullaney's, had many things he wanted to write after finding success in the alternative markets. By then he had given up on comic books and was writing for the Warren magazines. One of those projects was a detective story which got Mullaney even more excited about publishing. Mullaney loves the detective genre.

"I have a particular fondness for detective novels—that's why we did the *Mike Myst Minute Mysteries*—in addition to enjoying *Detectives Inc.* on its own merits as an editor. As a publisher, one of the marketing reasons for doing *Detectives Inc.* was to present a detective story to the comic book readers. I was presuming they enjoyed Don McGregor's work and Marshall Rogers' [the artist's] work and hey, by the way, you're getting a detective story. It's one way of getting them used to reading a detective story if they had never read one before." However, while sales were healthy on the book, the reviews were not as positive.

At the same time Mullaney was editing *Detectives Inc.*, he was working with his friend Steve Gerber on *Stewart the Rat*. "When I originally called Steve and asked if he would be interested in writing, he had Stewart already in mind. He wanted to work on it with artist Will Meugniot who had done assorted work in comics; Will was working with Hanna-Barbera at the time and couldn't meet any deadlines with the book.

"We wanted Gene Colan but we never thought we could get him because he was under contract at the time to Marvel. We went to Tom Sutton whose work I enjoy and Tom did 10 pages but he wasn't comfortable with the character—Tom's forte is more fantastic, more H.P. Lovecraft—we were a little uncomfortable with the way he was handling it. Then we called up Gene and he got permission from Marvel to do the book and that was that," Mullaney explains, between cigarettes.

In addition to Eclipse, Mullaney created and began editing *Comics Feature* for New Media Publishing in late 1979. This general interest fan magazine was New Media's answer to the heavy opinions expressed in *The Comics Journal*. Wishing to devote himself to Eclipse, Mullaney left after the first few issues.

By 1980, Mullaney felt the time was right to go ahead with a regular bimonthly graphic story magazine. Comic fandom had grown, and so had the direct sales comic shops, allowing better distribution systems to develop. "*Eclipse Magazine* was a project in my notebook that I wanted to do. But, as neophyte publishers at the beginning, we didn't feel we could do a bimonthly publication," Mullaney says. "We sort of learned the ropes of publishing by doing the one-shots and graphic albums. Publishing comics isn't an easy business and publishing in general isn't an easy business; we learned a lot in the three years we were publishing graphic albums, including how to publish. You not only have to have a creative head but you

have to learn the technical points about printing and all the mechanics involved. We also learned the distribution ropes."

Mullaney called upon people he had worked with before, like McGregor and Russell, and set about creating *Eclipse Magazine*. The first issue, which premiered last spring, sold out with 15,000 copies in print. The second and third issues received 20,000-copy print runs, and number four, which premiered around Thanksgiving, had a print run of over 20,000.

One very attractive thing *Eclipse Magazine* offers all its creators is retention of their copyright. Following the policies of *Epic Illustrated* and *Heavy Metal*, *Eclipse* lets creators own their work, and pays just for first time rights. Also, the page rates offered by Eclipse make them just as competitive as Marvel or DC, and Mullaney offers royalty arrangements with the creators. McGregor and Gulacy were seeing royalty money coming in a year after *Sabre* was published and that was after they received their page rates.

Mullaney has discovered, to his delight, that *Eclipse* has a loyal following, a following that has been growing with each passing publication. He's even begun running a letters column and his letters indicate an interest in such series as *Ms. Tree* and *Coyote*. "I think comic book fans are used to reading series. That has been the mainstay of comics for at least 20 years. We're also getting a lot of good response to the anthology stories and I think that's because the readers are not buying the magazine for the characters alone. They don't know who they are. But they will buy the magazine, for example, if they like Ken Steacy's work. They'll pay more attention to it.

"The more mainstream, 'straight' comic readers don't particularly like it when I include Howard Cruse or Hunt Emerson or the people whose roots are more underground or alternative. I look at it like a record album. People don't buy record albums because they enjoy every single song, they may like only a couple of tracks."

The positive reaction to *Eclipse* has given Mullaney the impetus to launch a second bi-monthly publication. Tentatively titled *Ms. Tree Magazine*, the lead feature will be the popular character brought over from *Eclipse*. Max Collins will edit the book, which will feature a 16-page Ms. Tree story, one other series and one anthology story. Mystery author Bob Randisi will contribute a book review column and Max Collins will also do a text feature, "The Visual Eye," which will cover the various visual interpretations of detectives.

Mullaney is also trying to move Eclipse into publishing regular four-color comics to complement the magazines and graphic novels. December saw the release of the much-talked-about *Destroyer Duck* by Gerber and Jack Kirby. Coming soon will be a six-part *Sabre* mini-series, another comic aimed at the direct-sales market. The first two issues of *Sabre* will contain the third printing of the first *Sabre* story, expanded by two pages to fit into two 20-page sections. The other four issues will contain the sequel to *Sabre*, written by Don McGregor. At press time, no artist had been named. Peter Gillis has written a series, *Dragons of Infinity*, which will serve as the back-up feature. Paul Gulacy has painted six covers for the series which will retail for $1 apiece—a price and format established by Pacific Comics with their *Captain Victory* comic last summer.

Another comic coming from Eclipse is *Scorpio Rose*, written by Stephen Englehart and drawn by Marshall Rogers. Running three issues, the story is a total reworking of the Madame Xanadu stories that Englehart pulled back from DC two summers ago over payment disputes.

A distinct lack of raw talent, however, hinders Mullaney to some extent. "One of the problems all comic book companies have is that the greatest artist in the country may be living in a small town in North Dakota and he or she is not in contact. The publisher has no idea the talent is out there. We have to rely on people getting in touch with us. We're very open to looking."

When Mullaney is not spending time trying to keep the Eclipse line on schedule (and with changing printers to get the right product, that's been a challenge!) he forces himself to spend at least an hour a day playing his music. Trained in classical viola and piano, Mullaney has added classical guitar and finds it relaxing to play Bach or anything from the fifteenth century on up. "It's my way of keeping sane," he explains. "I don't hang out with comic book people when I'm not working; it's just work." ■

What Buster Keaton Magazine?

Perhaps the most ambitious venture yet attempted by Eclipse Enterpriese is the only authorized Buster Keaton magazine. Mullaney, a film major from New York University, learned to appreciate Keaton's comic and cinematic genius, claiming, "Buster Keaton is one of the greatest filmmakers of all time."

The 64 page magazine will be edited by Don McGregor, an even bigger Keaton fan, with McGregor doing most of the writing. Working in tandem with William Hogarth, an illustrator who has worked with Keaton and his estate for many years, McGregor will do an illustrated biography that will be more than just a thumb-nail sketch of his life. Thanks to information provided by Raymond Rohauer, who has been associated with the Keaton estate, the bio will also feature anecdotes on how Keaton made his movies and performed his spectacular stunts.

Rohauer will be one of several people interviewed in the magazine along with Eleanor Keaton, Buster's widow, and Marion Mach who starred with Keaton in the 1927 film, *The General*.

McGregor will also contribute a 26 page essay on Keaton illustrated with many exclusive sequences from the comedian's films. Arrangements were made with the estate to take the stills directly from the 35mm prints, insuring as clear an image as possible.

Mullaney hopes to have the magazine ready for the St. Louis Art Institute opening of the Buster Keaton Film Festival on January 15. At the time the arrangements were made, Eclipse had only eight weeks to produce the magazine. The Film Festival has been playing around the country to rave reviews and excellent box office that rated inclusion on the *Variety* Top 50 chart for several weeks.

Creating the Comics

Part Two: Pencilling

By ROBERT GREENBERGER

Last issue we talked about the first steps in producing a comic: the plot and script. This issue we take a look at what happens next. Providing the information from a penciller's point of view, is Dick Giordano, managing editor at DC Comics and a highly respected artist for the past 20 years.

Giordano explains that once the artist receives the script, he begins to break down the story page by page to get a feel for the pacing. Many artists are given a lot of leeway by the editors to change portions of the story to improve on the action or the character interplay. In a full script, however, the artist isn't given as much opportunity to alter the material.

"I think one of the reasons why the plot-first style of scripting is superior to full scripts," Giordano says, "is that it allows the artist to make all the necessary decisions with regards to visual storytelling. Since you do not have captions and dialogue to help you with your storytelling, it's up to the artist to make the story work visually because he has no crutches to lean on."

While many pencillers provide complete pencils for a story, often an artist just does the breakdowns. Giordano explains the difference: "The breakdown is usually the prelude to full pencils. The first stage of pencilling is laying out the entire page lightly in pencil, determining where each character is in each panel in relation to each other and in relation to other panels. The backgrounds are indicated but not necessarily drawn out and no black areas are spotted so the drawings are basically outline drawings.

"A valuable penciller is better doing breakdowns so he can do more books. People who get really good at it, like John Buscema, have it down to almost a science so he can do one single line around a figure and define the entire figure, very simply, very quickly. You have just enough detail to know if it is Thor or Conan. I've inked enough of his stuff to marvel at his ability to get down to a few simple lines everything you need to know."

Pat Broderick's splash page for the *Fury of Firestorm* #1.

A penciller will next take the layouts to "their ultimate conclusion." Details on the characters are finished and the background details are provided. For superhero comics, Giordano adds that the "fully sculptured muscle patterns" are also put in.

"A good tight pencilled page can be photostated and look like a completed page," he observes. "George Perez has done some commercial jobs for us in pencil that we have photostated and reproduced as inked work. It was every bit as tight and controlled as a finished piece of work."

As a rule, artists work on pages that are one-and-one-half the size of a standard comic book page. According to Giordano, an artist, on the average, can produce a completed page a day, that is, either two pages of pencils or two pages of inks, or one page of pencil and inks. Giordano takes eight working days to complete a 17-page lead feature. "I would suspect that is the average but there are some people who can easily pencil four pages a day," he says. One of those people is Jack Kirby; another John Byrne. "John Byrne at a convention claimed he did a 17-page story in three or four days," Giordano adds.

"George Perez is quite fast," he continues. "I didn't believe he was that fast based on how long it took him to get a story in but when I've seen him pencil in the office, I realized he is quite fast."

One of Giordano's concerns as managing editor is the proper coordination of an artist to a series. Some artists, like Curt Swan who has worked on Superman for 20 years, are content to specialize on the one series. Others, such as Rich Buckler, stay on a series for only a short period of time. "There are some people," Giordano comments, "who are able to mesmerize themselves into being able to sit down and repeat things over and over again and feel comfortable doing that. Curt Swan, for example, is a steady, reliable, everyday sort of person. His work habits have not changed drastically from 1950 to 1980 and he manages to sit down and produce the same amount on a weekly or annual basis.

"Some people, like Buckler, are not that organized and maybe don't like to spend as much time at the drawing board as Curt does. So he's looking for the aphrodisiac of something different—the new challenge, the new character or 'I'll publish my own this month' or whatever the situation is. I have to admit, as an artist, I lean more toward that category. I've always been most productive as an artist when I have three or four jobs on my board in a given week. I don't mean different from the previous week but different from each other: a commercial job to ink, a standard comic book job to pencil or a cover to pencil and ink. One of the reasons I'm in the comic book industry at all is because my personality requires I meet new challenges on a day to day basis. My art school training was in advertising and you took

...OR IS THERE? IT'S JUST POSSIBLE THAT UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, WITH SUCH A TOTALLY LACKING MUSCULAR CONTROL...
...I CAN TELEPATHICALLY "PUT MY MIND IN HIS BODY"
THE "BRAIN" OF HUMANS REMAIN ANATOMICAL VESTIGES OF THEIR EVOLUTIONARY ANCESTORS INCLUDING THE EARLIEST SEA-DWELLERS!
IF THE KRYPTONIANS' EVOLUTION DIFFERED SIMILARLY...
...I CAN CONTROL SUPERMAN'S BODY THROUGH THAT ATAVISTIC "FISH-BRAIN!"
DO NOT RESIST, MY FRIEND... OPEN YOUR MIND TO MY COMMANDS... TRUST ME-
IT'S WORKING!
MOVING HIS ARM FSH-ENOUGH THOUGH! I'VE GOT TO COMMAND HIM TO USE HIS HEAT VISION-BUT I'M NOT SURE HOW!
MAYBE IF I CONCENTRATE ON HIS EYES...

Irv Novick
***DC Comics Presents:* Superman and Aquaman**

Curt Swan
***Superman* #373**

Joe Staton
Green Lantern

Ernie Colon
Arak, Son of Thunder

one ad and spent two weeks coming to the ultimate conclusion."

Giordano feels that each artist should develop a style but cautions it should be the artist's natural style. "Style is a natural thing," he observes. "It will be like your handwriting, eventually it will assert yourself no matter what you do. You may say, 'Gee, I like Berni Wrightson's stuff so I'm going to sit down and draw like Berni Wrightson.' You might be able to get away with that for two or three years but if that's not your natural style, you will eventually revert back to whatever your natural style is.

"That's one of the problems of people entering the field, is that they concern themselves with style—'I want to be Neal Adams'—or they want to be Berni Wrightson and they want to do that rather than adjusting themselves to the problems of learning to tell a story clearly and letting style develop by itself."

It's Giordano's contention that storytelling is everything, and the greatest responsibility falls onto the penciller's shoulders. "The storyteller, cartoonist, artist who draws the story has an absolute obligation to make sure that all the information that is necessary for the audience to understand the story is presented. He has more leeway and more power than almost anybody in any of the entertainment media. He designs sets, he casts his own stories, he designs his costumes, he decides on the time of day for the most part. There's almost no power that isn't available to the person who draws the story. With that power goes an attendant amount of responsibility that he has to use that power to do all of the things that he needs to do. I mean, designing characters that are recognizable from a distance as well as close up and I don't mean simply by the virtue of one man having blond hair or black, but the shape and the size of the characters and their characteristics.

"At no point should the reader stop and wonder where this is taking place. This may sound very simple but if you've read some black and white magazines that were drawn overseas, they just don't tell stories well. You read it and say, 'What was that?' Beautiful drawings, gorgeous drawings sometimes, but no feeling of having been involved in an event.

"A storyteller's obligation is to draw the reader into the storyline by the first page, keep them involved in the story page by page, make them care about what's happening and to present all the facts that are necessary, so that the audience will understand as much of the story as the narrator did when he wrote the script."

And in the process of telling the story, Giordano points out, the requirements change with the genre. Drawing a superhero story, for instance, involves different techniques and disciplines than drawing a Western, war or romance story. Giordano misses the variety of comics that used to exist but remarks that the direct sales market has dictated its desires and the publishers must comply.

In drawing a superhero tale, the penciller must make everything BIG. The action is on a grander; almost cosmic scale than in other more mundane stories. Giordano points out that when drawing a superhero story the characters are drawn larger; instead of eight heads high, as art students are taught, the figures should be nine heads tall. For a romance story, he notes, the design and the subtleties become the major concerns. There are more emotional highs and lows involved, requiring an artist to go softer in his approach. And a mystery story requires mood, atmosphere and an attention to pacing to properly set up the reader for whatever plot twists the story has in store.

"All of those needs require that the artist have a good understanding of what makes for a good, exotic background and/or the ability to get research on it. So if a story takes place in the jungle it has an air of credibility, and credibility is the thing you strive for in storytelling," Giordano says.

"The jungle has an air of credibility if you have researched the types of plant life that is normally associated with the jungle and you've drawn it and presented it accurately. It becomes acceptable and credible to the audience immediately, you don't have to explain it any further. A good drawing of the jungle can say it better than any caption can.

What About the Kid in Duluth?

If you don't live near New York but you want to draw comic books, what avenues are open to you? Dick Giordano pointed out just how limited the choices are.

He and protege Frank McLaughlin have completed work on a four volume set of books, culled from courses the two have given, on drawing comics. "If my books do what I hope they can do, that will be a part of it. There are some books like *Drawing Comics the Marvel Way* which is really little more than a paid house ad for Stan Lee and John Buscema. There is some information there but it is nowhere near as much information necessary to take those with a modicum of talent and turn them into comic artists. It takes them to the next step, sure, all of these instructional books will take them to the next step. We have to find a place for them to go after the next step," he says.

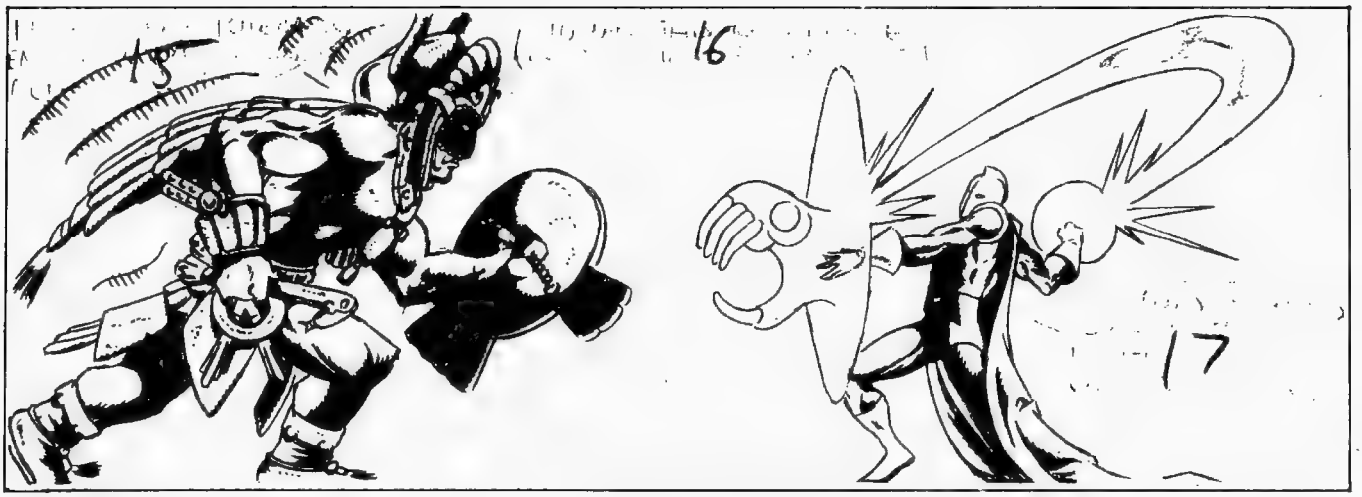
Before the cancellation of *Secrets of Haunted House* and the other mystery comics, Giordano had initiated an apprenticeship program that was approved by Warner Communications, DC's parent company. It was understood that certain stores were to be drawn for the mystery comics by several people DC felt showed potential. If the stories were good, they would be published; if the work was not up to standard, it would be destroyed.

"I cried for a week over the cancellations," he says. "The final decision was made to make room for more titles and those were the most likely candidates despite the fact that I argued that we needed the space to develop new talent."

Replacing the apprenticeship program is a regularly scheduled workshop, run by Giordano on office time, working with three or four artists at a time, who display talent. They will be doing actual stories as well as learning the basics. People selected for both the apprenticeship program and workshop were chosen from sample portfolios Giordano screened at DC. Two artists have since gone on to do work for DC; the first, Mark Texiera, who is pencilling *Warlord* and the other, Paris Cullen, is a name that Giordano says we will all know soon enough.

The proximity remains a critical point, Giordano says. "You can come here, establish your credentials and go back to wherever you came from. Mike Grell did that, for example. He came here long enough to establish his credentials, created *Warlord* and went back home and we haven't seen him since.

"It's also true that people like [out-of-town artists and newcomers] Jerry Ordway and Dennis Jensen are very talented, very useful people to us but they will miss out on very good paying jobs because they're not nearby. They'll continue to work but very often a commercial job will come up and it has to be done in two days' time and it takes two days to mail it there. They have to be automatically eliminated from consideration."



Keith Griffen's opening installment of the *Dr. Fate* back-up series in *The Flash*.

"Credibility is a word I just bandied about a bit, and it's a very critical one, I think, because credibility does not necessarily mean realism. I think most people agree that most things Jack Kirby draws are not realistic, but they are credible—you believe they exist. I'm sure the same thing is true of Snoopy's dog house. Most people will accept it and believe it is a dog house. So credibility can take many forms. The essential ingredient in good storytelling is that the story be credible."

One final area Giordano speaks of involves the artist's overall role in the comic book. The mystery comics involve anthology stories by many different creators but the superhero comics involve creative teams that give a specific title its own look and feel. When a new artist comes along, Giordano feels special attention must be given to the character and the readership.

"I pencilled a Conan story for *Savage Sword of Conan.* I wasn't going to do the one afterwards and I didn't do the story before this one. I felt obligated to come as close to drawing in as close a style and technique as the people who preceeded me and the people who were going to come after me, so this story would not strike a discordant note with the readers in the full line of Conan stories. I put what I would rather do myself aside and did Conan as I have seen Buscema and Neal Adams draw Conan so it would fit into the mold. That, to me, was part of the storytelling technique that I employed in that particular story."

On the other hand, Giordano was the first artist on the *Human Target* series for DC and *Sarge Steel* for Charlton and he felt obligated to establish the style for future artists to follow. "And I was very glad to do so," he adds.

"If I were given Conan to do for, say, the next three years," he continues, "maybe I'd disagree with what had gone on before but there wouldn't be a revolution—more like an evolution of the art. I would change it to what I would like it to be and do it very carefully and do it slowly enough so the readers would come along with me slowly without bending their eyes out of shape.

"When I was a kid, one of the things that would bother the hell out of me would be to pick up an issue of Batman and say, 'That isn't Batman.' I just felt uncomfortable, especially with *Air Boy* which used to change artists regularly. I gave up reading that strip because I couldn't recognize the character."

And to Giordano, the reader, and Giordano, the artist, making the characters recognizable and drawing the reader into the story are the most important tasks facing the penciller. Without the proper storytelling techniques, the artist can never get the reader to believe in the story. If the reader doesn't believe in the story then he has not done his job. ■

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Guest Spot

On Creator's Rights

By JOHN BYRNE

Editor's Note: Always a fanatical follower of comics, John Byrne entered the professional comic ranks at Charlton in the 1970s where he made a name for himself with such features as Rog 2000. *As the Charlton books faded away, Byrne found himself at Marvel Comics where he has risen to become their brightest new star in years. Currently scripting and drawing the* Fantastic Four, *Byrne is one of the most popular creators with fans today.*

One of the questions with which I am most often confronted at comic-book conventions across the United States is one which has seen a great deal of publicity in various organs of the fan press of late, and one to which I would like to address myself. The question is what is the creator's right, and doubtless anyone who can read a comic-book above the *Sugar and Spike* level has been aware of much bellowing and chest-thumping on both sides of the question in recent months.

For those of you who may have been lucky enough to have missed out on the fun, there is a movement growing amongst comic professionals which, carried to its logical and laudable outcome would see everyone getting due and proper recompense for their creative efforts. This is above and beyond the flat page-rate artists and writers receive, and even beyond royalties, which are themselves a recent addition to the industry. No, we're talking here about what might well be called a "piece of the action." If an artist or writer creates a character that makes a million dollars for the company, said creator should get some of that money. That's what some people say, and that's precisely what has not been happening.

When a comic pro creates a new character, or any other such merchandizable commodity, it belongs wholly and solely to thecompany. This is true of every extant character from Superman on down (or was until recently; DC has started paying creators real money for their creations). Most of us remember the Seigel and Shuster suit of a few years back, in which the creators of Superman sued for the ownership of their brainchild, or at least a share of the vast monies DC was annually raking in from the character. The suit never actually made it beyond the sabre-rattling stage, since DC quickly accepted the role of evil and villainous multinational conglomerate, confessed their sins against man and God, and granted life-time pensions to the cofathers of their cornerstone character.

For myself I don't think canonization would be too extreme a reward for the men who created Superman, however little of their creation may actually remain in the current incarnation of the Man of Steel, but that abortive suit raised for me a number of questions, questions which have only been rekindled by recent events vis-a-vis creator's rights.

On a purely human level, were Seigal and Shuster entitled to their pensions? The answer is yes, of course. But on any other level? Sorry, but the answer is a fat "no." They may have been two little dumb hicks from the midwest, unfamiliar with the machinations of the publishing industry of the late 1930's. They also were creators of the single character on whom the rest of us have created an entire industry. But the fact remains that the character had been generally rejected (the Bell Syndicate said it had "no lasting appeal") when the infant DC took a risk and bought the idea from Seigal and Shuster. And don't be fooled by the paltry sum they were paid, generally reported at something under $200. That was a lot of money in 1938.

My point then is this: If we are going to have creator's rights, ensuring a fair return, a fair share of the profits for the boys with the imaginations and talent, should we not then also have (excuse the pun) creator's wrongs? In all the noise and fury over everyone getting a fair share I have not heard one so-called creator offering the flip side of the coin. No one has said they would be willing to take a loss if their creation fell flat on its very expensive face.

Comics are an artform masquerading as a business, or a business masquerading as an artform, take your pick. Either way, the bottom line is, in this case, the line at the bottom of the accountant's column of figures, and if that line is entered in red ink the company has taken a loss. According to Jim Shooter, Marvel Comics has never once produced a comic knowing it would bomb. Looking at some of the turkeys we've ground out over the last decade we can see some monumental lapses in judgment, but I believe Jim's assessment is true. The bigger brains, the finger-in-the-wind boys have only the general mood of an often very fickle public upon which to base their decisions as to what particular venture's time has finally come. If they guess wrong, the company loses money, and the title goes away.

Is there anyone out there willing to return the money they made while producing some of these duds? Is that a thunderous silence I hear? I thought so.

That's where my anger comes from in this whole business of creators' rights. I know I have, of late, taken on the mantle of a "company man," and in many ways I am deserving of the title. Even proud. I am a cog in the machine which is Marvel Comics, and I rejoice in that. When I speak of Marvel down the years I often say "we", as in "We put out thus and such a book . . .," even if I was a 12-year-old fan when "we" did so. I like working for

Marvel. I love being involved in the production of comics, and I am pleased enough with the money I make doing it. If Marvel offered me twice as much tomorrow, I'd certainly take it. In the words of Dudley Moore's "Arthur," "I'm not stupid." But if Marvel were to show me just reason for halving my salary tomorrow, I would also accept that. It's a business, and realistically, if we don't like being involved in the negative aspects of that business, we should get out.

Don't get me wrong, here, now. I am not campaigning *against* creator's rights. I think it's a dandy idea, and if DC is doing something about it, such as granting justly deserved stipends to Marv Wolfman and George Perez for the efforts on the *New Teen Titans,* they are to be applauded. Marvel lags behind for reasons far too complex to go into here, especially since doing so would not be my place. So let's have creator's rights. Let's have vast sums of filthy lucre showering down on our furry little heads for every dollar Marvel or DC makes off our talents, but let's not have any more of the other end of the arguments.

Let's not have people coming into the comics, creating something, and then looking innocently astounded as the company takes complete possession. Let's not have any more of this "You-mean-the-rules-that-have-been-in-effect-for-the-last-40-years-apply-to-*me?*" crap. The whole concept of work-for-hire has been a thorn in the side of creative people for a long, long time, but it has also been the bounden duty of those who entered the industry to accept the rules, and not expect their presence to modify their little corner of the cosmos. It is not the creators, or even the industry in the long run, who will suffer if those of us within the industry continue to mutter and moan about the existing rules. It is *you* the fans, the people who every week buy our comics. Because there are many artists and writers who are holding back, who are declining to create for the company, because the company will then own what they create.

This is childish and unfair. I'm all in favor of campaigning for changing the rules, but let's live within the rules while they're around.

The basis of the nonsense that some people have been advocating lies, of course, in the assumption on the part of some creative people that their character is going to be the next Spider-Man, and they won't give such a gold-mine to Marvel unless they are guaranteed a piece of the pie. Fair enough, in principle. But let's be honest with ourselves. In the first place, it is highly unlikely that there is going to *be* a next Spider-Man, and in the second place, if Stan Lee had thought along these lines, there wouldn't have been a Spider-Man in the first place. So when you go out campaigning for creator's rights, keep in mind who gets the short end of the stick in this deal. It's the fan, who has to put up with rehashing of the same old garbage because the so-called creators won't create.

And that's what makes me mad, especially when I hear it from people whose work I have admired in the past, and who I may even number among my friends. It's never stopped me, friend. I'm not about to compare myself, or my creations with Stan and *Spider-Man,* but the *X-Men* would be short a member, and you never would have seen *Alpha Flight* if I had thought the way so many of my contemporaries do.

Fortunately there is a sizable chunk

"I am a cog in the machine which is Marvel Comics and I rejoice in that."

of us left who think along the lines I've been pushing here. Let's keep the politicking out of the comics. Let's be a tad more concerned with producing a top-quality package, and a lot less concerned with how much we're going to make off it. Let's remember the days of the so-called Golden Age of comics. Any creator from that period would think he had died and gone to Heaven if he could suddenly be transported through time to work in the market of today. The money is very, very good, if you're willing to work at it, and work consistently. And it's fun, and the hours are as easy as you want to make them.

Alright, so we don't get all the benefits we might. They'll come. The other goodies came, and they were worth waiting for. Sure I'd like a piece of the Kitty Pryde doll, if there ever is one. Sure I'd like a chunk of *Sprite—The Movie* if anyone is crazy enough to make it, but not retroactively. If Marvel establishes a policy ensuring creator's rights I'll be there cheering along with everyone else, but I won't be insisting that I should get royalties for the stuff I created for them before the new rules, and I will be prepared to take a loss if my creations die horrible deaths.

Put into concrete terms, when Marvel started talking about the one-shot *Silver Surfer* book that Stan and I were doing as being potentially one of the biggest sellers the company has ever published I broached to Shooter the idea of possibly taking a cut of the profits in lieu of my usual page rate. Jim explained that was out of the question as the structure of the company stands at the moment, but promised to at least try to get me a sizable bonus if the book did as well as was expected.

Not only did that sound fair enough, it also created the availability of the same deal for other artists and writers. Marvel could not give me a special deal and deny it to others, so Jim created something that would fit in across the board.

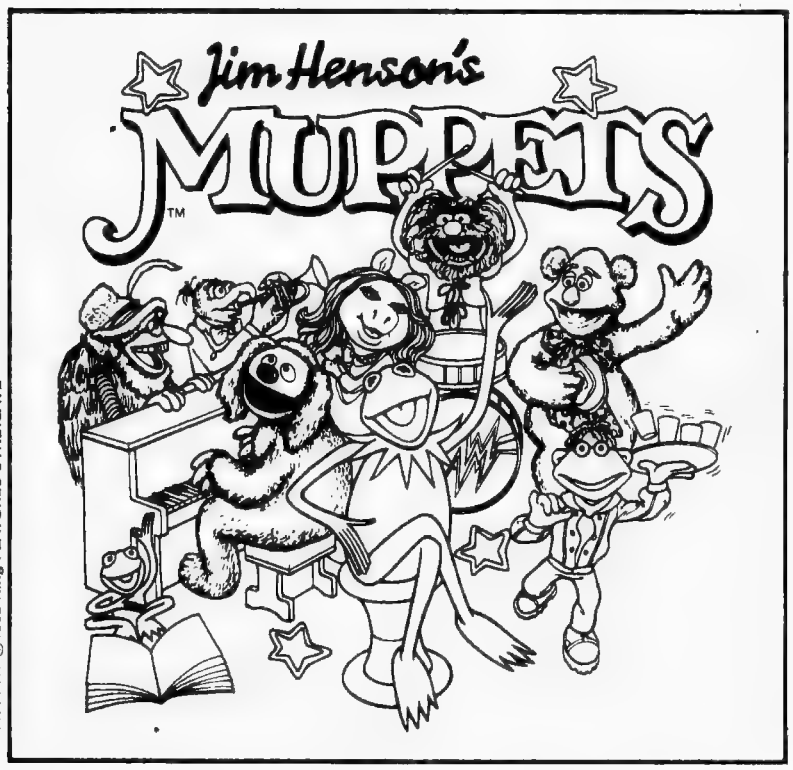
Well, the first sales are in on the *Surfer* and they aren't anywhere near what was expected. I personally think they'll climb once fans get a chance to actually *see* the book, and realize it is not another turkey being touted as God's gift to comics in a standard hype approach. But the fact remains that my bonus has probably gone the way of all flesh, and had I been taking a piece of the sales instead I might easily end up with less than my page rate would have brought me.

So I'm lucky to have anything coming out of this deal really, aren't I?

That, after all this, is probably my most basic point. Let's have all kinds of benefits and goodies, but let's not lose sight of what comics are all about. This is conceivably the best damn business in the world. Better than anything I can think of in terms of pure joy at being able to do this sort of work on a daily basis. But if we're going to look at this as a hard dollars-and-cents proposition, lets not be hypocrites about it. Let's acknowledge the flaws in the system, and work to build a better one, but let's not try to take along with us the cushy stuff we *like* from the old system. I'm in favor of getting a piece of the action, but something akin to a Protestant Work Ethic insists it should be on an either/or basis. Either a flat rate up front (and no loss if the product bombs), or a piece of the profit (and an equal share of the loss).

End of sermon. ■

It's the Guy and Brad Show



Two fun-loving boys discuss how they write and draw the Muppet comic strip and reveal their love affair with the characters

By SUE ADAMO

It's Tuesday night in Farmington, Connecticut. In a garage-turned-studio, two brothers sit at opposite ends of a table, each armed with a week's worth of gags. Until the wee hours they sift through the winners and losers, gauging their success by the laughs they bring. And so begins another week of bringing *The Muppets* comic strip to life.

"The number one thing with the way we work is the characters' personalities which are so strong and so believable," says artist Guy Gilchrist, half of the creative team behind the strip. "They're such well-rounded, three-dimensional characters. We write the strip the way you'd write a good television show. *Mary Tyler Moore Show*—great show because it has great characters and all that those writers did, after they had the characters so well done and everybody knew them so well, was take the characters and stick them in Lou's office and you get yourself a half-hour show because they just bounce off each other. That's what we do."

The road to the strip's September 21, 1981 premiere was paved early on in the Gilchrists' lives. "When we were real little," recalls Guy, "our mother would draw, copy pictures out of the Disney books. She used to draw a great Bugs Bunny, too."

"We were comic collectors as kids," writer Brad, 22, adds. "We had 2-3,000 comic books—Flash Gordon, Batman. We grew up in the Batman craze. A little later on we got into Conan and the Disneys."

At the age of 12, Guy began taking jobs at local fairs doing caricatures. "In high school," he reports, "I was Joe Whiz and was editor of everything. I was patrolling the streets of New York, you know, going to *Mad Magazine* and getting my rejection slips, doing art for fanzines or anywhere I could. . . . So, I've been going along just forever. That's how you get successful at 24. The big influence for me, as far as art: Walt Kelly is number one and Disney, Paul Terry, Lou Fine and Eisner—all the Quality Comics."

A major break in the Gilchrists' careers came when they were hired by Xerox Education Publications for its *Weekly Reader*. "It's a direct mail comic book that we did for their book club called *Super Kernel* comics. It's a funny animal comic, they're little morality plays and it has a readership, still does, of over 300,000 kids nationally, kids seven to 12 years old. They're in reprints now," reports Guy. During the four years working on *Kernel*, the brothers also had their hands in a number of game and joke books, four of which have collectively sold over two million copies.

Another rung on the ladder to success was climbed when Guy joined the National Cartoonists Society. "I was very lucky to get in and meet all my idols and one of the people I was fortunate to meet was Mort Walker—wonderful gentleman—and we got to know each other. I did a lecture or two down at the Museum of Cartoon Art in Port Chester N.Y.]. Brad and I got very involved in the museum and Mort is president of the museum, by the way. Brad did a beautiful nine-by-three-foot stained glass skylight depicting all the major characters of the cartoonists that are in the Museum Hall of Fame.

We knew Mort from there and from the Cartoonists' Society.

"Bill Yates, who's the comics editor at King Features, was playing an oft-repeated game of golf with Mort . . . It was common knowledge in the industry that they had been looking for a long time for people to do the *Muppet* strip though I didn't know it. Henson Associates had approached King Features a couple of years back with the idea of doing a strip and they really could just never get the right gel , the right talent for the strip and Bill said, 'We're looking,' and Mort said, 'Why don't you call Guy and Brad and give them a shot?' Bill called me about nine o'clock one morning and said, 'Try out for the strip,' and I was ecstatic. I couldn't believe it."

To prepare for the tryout, Guy and Brad gathered all the Muppetabilia collected throughout the years and started brainstorming.

"We had a lot of Muppet stuff around and just got it all in one room and said, 'All right, we don't really know much about the comic strip, but let's do the kind of comic strip that when we open up the newspaper, we'd like to see as fans.' So, kind of naively I guess, we just approached it our own way," says Guy. The brothers came up with six finished daily strips, and sent them off to King Features. When the syndicate requested more samples, Guy raced through 20 pencils in one evening, sent them to Yates who channeled them to Henson Associates. A meeting was then set up between the Gilchrists, Jane Leventhal, president of Henson Organization Publications, and Muppets art director Michael Frith.

"He's responsible for the look of the Muppets," says Guy, "that universal, classic look that the Muppets have, from everything to the grandest movie poster to a Miss Piggy pencil. He's responsible for *everything,* including a lot of the design of the Muppets you see.

"We met him and a couple of other folks at Henson's and we just got along real well. I think that what we were giving them was very raw stuff but I guess they saw something there and they said, 'We'll get back to you.' "

That was in October, 1980. By January, Guy delivered 60 more pencils to King Features. "We didn't want to let this thing die, but we didn't think we had a shot, especially after three months of waiting. Bill called one day and said, 'Something's going on!' and about eight o'clock that night, I got a call from Hollywood, *dadadadadadada Hollywood.* Actually, it's *close* to Hollywood.

"Jerry Juhl, who is the head writer for the Muppets and has been with Jim Henson since day one, called and said, 'Congratulations, you have the job.' I went nuts. I went and told Mary, my wife. Then I went over to Brad's side of the house, he lives right next door in the same house, and said, 'Brad, we got the *Muppet* job.' "

Speculates Guy, "I think that one of the reasons we got the job, besides that we know the Muppets, was that I really got along with Michael. We have similar styles of art and the writing was there. We knew the personalities of the Muppets and I think that our enthusiasm for the project, our love for the Muppets and the fact that, where a lot of cartoonists might have said, 'How much money am I getting for trying out?' and figuring how much work they would do to try out, we just went overboard. We didn't mind, you know, 'We'll pay *you,* we want to do this so badly.' I worked just about every night doing things *just in case* when that phone call came we would have that one thing we would need to get the job. We would never be able to say, 'Gee, we might have gotten the job if we tried harder.' That's the way you get successful, I think. Give the 200 per cent when everybody else is giving 100. That's really the whole philosophy around here: to work hard and to do quality things."

The next step for the Gilchrists was to meet the people involved in the Muppets' world. The brothers were whisked into New York, set up in the Westbury Hotel and immersed in Muppetdom.

"We lived in the house the frog built," laughs Guy. "Henson Associates have a beautiful Victorian brownstone on the east side of Manhattan. We just lived there, got to know everyone. What we realized is that everybody that works on the Muppets—they're all family. There's a deep love between everybody that works there and it shows in the products . . .

"The caper was on Saturday. Jim

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JUST LUCKY, I GUESS!!
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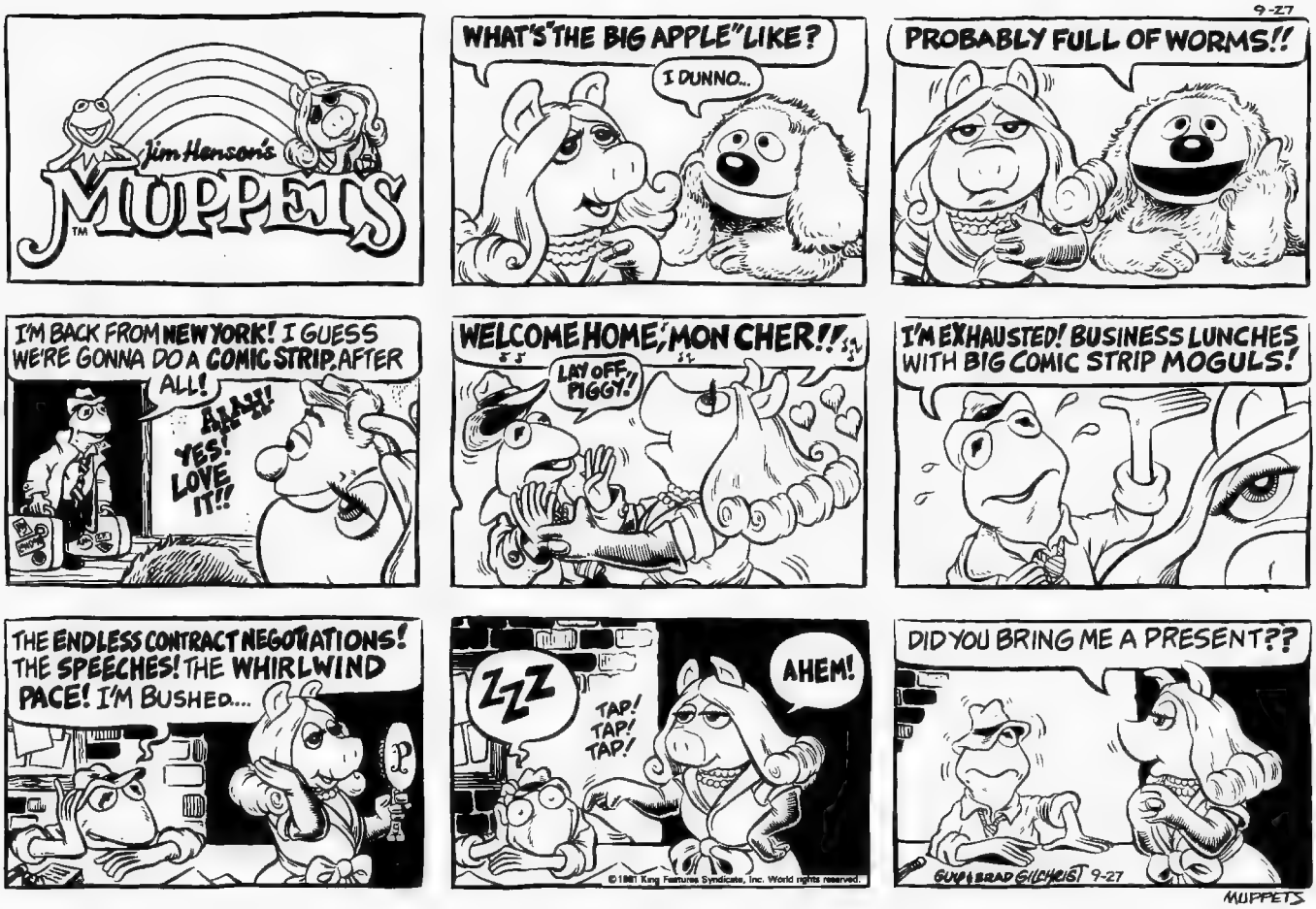
Jim Henson's MUPPETS
WHAT'S "THE BIG APPLE" LIKE?
I DUNNO...
PROBABLY FULL OF WORMS!!
I'M BACK FROM NEW YORK! I GUESS WE'RE GONNA DO A COMIC STRIP AFTER ALL!
HAH!! YES! LOVE IT!!
WELCOME HOME, MON CHER!!
LAY OFF, PIGGY!
I'M EXHAUSTED! BUSINESS LUNCHES WITH BIG COMIC STRIP MOGULS!
THE ENDLESS CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS! THE SPEECHES! THE WHIRLWIND PACE! I'M BUSHED....
ZZZ
TAP! TAP! TAP!
AHEM!
DID YOU BRING ME A PRESENT??
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GUY & BRAD GILCHRIST 9-27
MUPPETS

Henson came to New York . . . He said that he wanted to meet us, see if we were the type of people that he wanted to entrust. This is a very important thing to Jim. . . . We got there about four hours early and we were working on gags and this guy just pops his head into the conference room and says (in Kermit voice) 'Hi there, see you later.' . . . and we had our meeting with him and he is the nicest, warmest gentleman you'd ever want to meet."

When the strip bowed, it did so with the distinction of having the highest number of clients at launch time than any strip in syndication history. With over 500 daily and Sunday newspapers, *Muppets* topped the numbers of *Hagar the Horrible* which, at its premiere in 1973, had over 200. So popular was the strip that two Philadelphia newspapers went to court over it.

Says a spokesperson at King, "There was some misunderstanding of how *The Muppets* was being offered, which was by bid in selected competetive markets. The *Philadelphia Bulletin* didn't get its bid in on time and King sold it to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The *Bulletin* challenged the method in which King offered the feature. But the court ruled that King Features had a right to sell it to the *Inquirer* in the manner which they did.

"The president of the *Bulletin* testified he believed the *Muppets* was the hottest new newspaper comic strip in his memory. He went on to say it was a most desirable feature for a newspaper to carry and he testified that under oath. That's impressive."

Also impressive is the wide variety of foreign countries which are carrying the strip, some in their native tongue. These include Venezuela, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, South Africa, United Arab Republic, Finland, Singapore and Australia.

"There's a fear," admits Guy, "that you can't take characters from one medium and put them into another and make them work. There's a long, long list of duds from movies and television that they tried to make into comic strips. We sat down and really analyzed why they failed and we came up with pretty easy answers and what we do is we make sure every day that it's funny.

"We have scenes that build through the strips, but there's a gag in each strip and you don't have to pick it up every day. You can pick it up any day and you'll understand the characters and, hopefully, you'll laugh.

"We don't go by what's going on in the television show, in the movies, in the books, records or anything else. *The Muppets* comic strip is a separate entity all its own. The only things they have in common is, of course, the characters and the strong personalities. We try to take the universal Muppets' feel . . . it's something intangible, but it's there. Every Muppet fan can feel it. They don't really understand why they love these characters . . . but we try to take that feel and translate it into comics.

"The other thing," continues Guy, "is that I don't draw the characters photographically. I do a very soft caricature of them and make them into believable characters . . . They're not puppets, they're real people and they bounce all over the strip. They really live on the comic page and the art is very illustrative also.

"People say, 'You reduce them to postage stamps.' 'You can't do this. 'You can't do that.' I didn't know that and we just came up with what we like and it seems that a lot of people like it because we're selling the comic and it seems to be working. Jim really likes it. Jim, by the way, approves every strip personally."

A brief tour through the process of bringing Kermit, Miss Piggy, Rowlf and the rest of Henson's beloved barnyard to the page goes something like this: After the Tuesday night conference, the accepted gags are written on small, preprinted sheets with accompanying sketches and sent to Henson Associates. From there, they go to Michael Frith and Jerry Juhl. Frith and Juhl, Guy explains, are an "indespensible" unit of creative col-

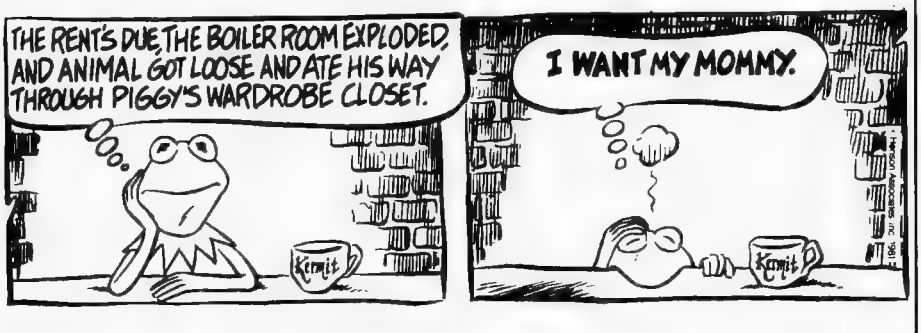
laboration for the brothers, offering different points of view from which to direct a gag.

"I draw very big, I draw 19 inches long," calculates Guy. "I draw in a very tight pencil sketch and send it in to Michael. Michael goes through them and makes sure the characters look right and just about always they do. Then it's back to me. From there, I go to finished ink. It sounds complicated, and it sounds like it's going to be very time consuming, but it's worth every minute."

Adds Brad, "Because you get all the feedback and you get some good ideas from Jerry. He'll say, 'This is a really good idea. Why don't you guys stretch it and do more Western-type stuff or do something with this. . . .'"

"Or," puts in Guy, "that it's something they always wanted to do in the show but couldn't think of how to do it and here you are doing it in the strip. People think we're limited because of the strip and that we can't do a lot of things that they do on the show. But you can turn that around just as easily. There's a lot of things we *can* do.

"What happens with all this feedback from everybody is that when the strip finally goes out, when it's done and there's been a lot more work put into it, a lot more time, we've done the best way of presenting that one single gag. When the strip goes out, I really don't know how it can be any better than it is and I think that's why it's become so uccessful with the editors. I think they can see that this is no throwaway, this is something that's going to be around because of the time and the caring and everyone that's involved with it." Poses Guy, "Do you get the idea that we love this thing?" ■


THE RENT'S DUE, THE BOILER ROOM EXPLODED, AND ANIMAL GOT LOOSE AND ATE HIS WAY THROUGH PIGGY'S WARDROBE CLOSET.
Kermit
I WANT MY MOMMY.
Kermit

Muppets Invade Port Chester

The Museum of Cartoon Art in Port Chester, New York featured a special exhibit of Muppet artwork from October 4 through December. The exhibit contained original design sketches by Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets, and Michael Frith, the Muppets' art director, and original comic strips and full-color paintings by the Muppet cartoonists Guy and Brad Gilchrist. Three of the "Frackle" monsters, who are regularly featured characters of the *Muppet Show*, were also displayed to demonstrate how three dimensional puppets evolve from two dimensional drawings.

According to Brian Walker, director of the museum, "The success of the Muppets has been established by the strength of their personalities, which is a direct result of their design. Although specifically created for the television medium, and aided by brilliant special effects, the magic of the Muppets lies in the simple directness of their faces. In much the same way that classic cartoon characters are created, Jim Henson and Michael Frith doodle out their thoughts on the backs of scrap paper, napkins, menus or whatever else is on hand. When the right formula is arrived at, Henson and Frith use these sketches to direct the Muppet builders in the construction of the three dimensional characters. The Museum exhibit will include many of these loose, casual doodlings alongside a photograph of the finished muppet. The relationship between the familiar stars of the Muppet TV shows and movies and the cartoon beginnings of their personalities should be dramatically evident."

The Museum of Cartoon Art is located on Comly Avenue in Port Chester, New York, one mile south of the King Street exit off the Hutchinson River/Merrit Parkway. Hours are Tuesday through Friday 10:00 to 4:00, Sunday 1:00 to 5:00. Admission is $1 adults, 50¢ children 12 years and under, 50¢ senior citizens. For directions and information, call (914) 939-0234.

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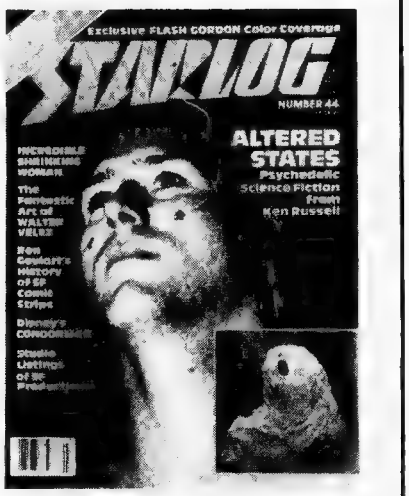

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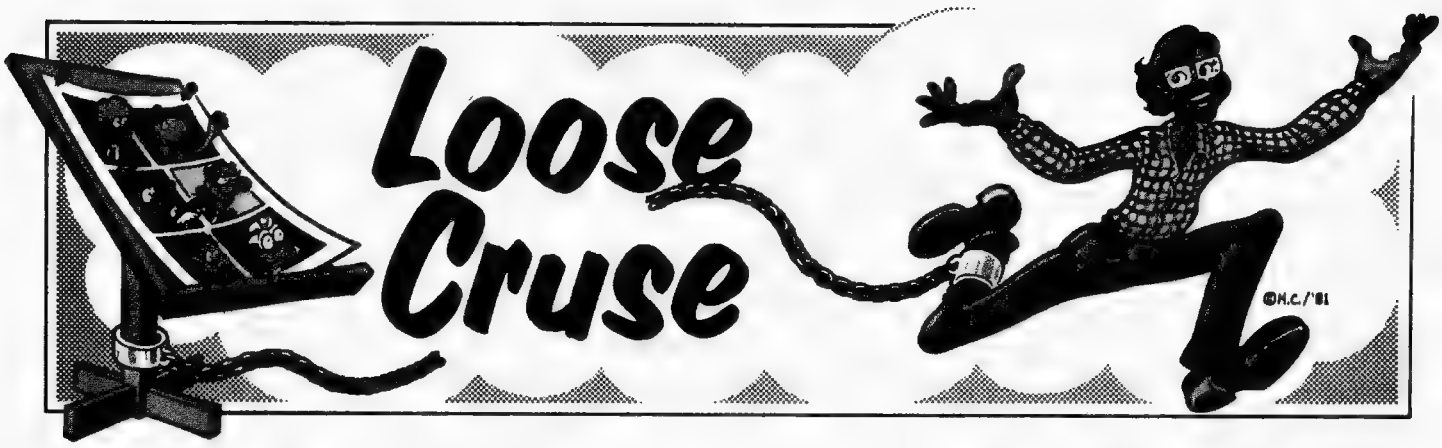

Man With a Stupid Bird

By HOWARD CRUSE

As much as we're all basically the same as human beings, we each have a little different view of the world. I call it a *skew;* each of us is *skewed* at a different angle. And that little slant that each of us has is really the key to our originality."

The man speaking is Marvin Tannenberg, a slender comic artist of 52 with some salt in his peppery beard and a wickedly friendly row of teeth that flash when he grins.

I met him a few years ago at a gathering of the Cartoonists Guild at the Lotos Club in New York. He was the Guild's first president some 14 years ago, and one of the most prolific single-panel gag cartoonists of the sixties. Marv signed his abbreviated signature *Tann* to hundreds of cartoons in *Playboy, Saturday Evening Post, Saturday Review, Look, True*—practically all of the major markets of the time.

Then he dropped out.

There's a story behind that, and even more of a story in the changes that have brought him back to the drawing board during the past few years. He's in touch with his own *skew* now, and it makes a difference in the images that cavort through his mind, across his paper, and even across odd, unexpected corners of his Upper West Side apartment.

"The work I'm doing now is very much what's been happening in the undergrounds," Marv remarks. I can see the connection well; that's part of the reason I've asked him to let me share some of our conversation with the readers of COMICS SCENE. Marvin Tannenberg's artistic history and demographic pigeonhole are both very different from mine, but we share a feeling about our field: that the more comic book structure can bend to reflect the individualized humanity of its artists, the more its potential as an art form can be realized. This conviction, less conspicuous than the sex'n'dope gags and gleeful violence that gave UGs their reputation for outrageousness, is the more durable legacy of the *Zaps, Snarks* and *Furry Freaks* that erupted from the comic-book counterculture during the sixties and seventies.

Al Jaffee characterized Marv's sense of humor as "cerebral." *National Lampoon* printed Tann's drawing of a middle-aged guy in an easy chair talking back to his electric coffee percolator: ". . . Then on the other hand, bup-a-bup, a-bup-bup, ba-pup-pup . . ." Marv has a taste for silly words, says he has a "snoodified" view of the world.

And a concerned view—one that, when the issue warrants, provokes him to action. Two years ago he camped out in soggy weather with 2500 other anti-nuclear activists attempting a symbolic occupation of the Seabrook nuclear plant. Similar civil disobedience at the Indian Point plant resulted in two weeks logged in a Westchester County jail.

Still, if you weren't alongside him at Seabrook, you may not have been conscious of Marvin Tannenberg in recent years. *I* haven't been. He hasn't been available, other than through his old gag panels which are periodically reprinted in cartoon anthologies.

But his pen is back in hand today. Marv likes to quote Sam Gross's observation: "Cartooning is a terminal disease." A tough bug to shake.

You'd think symptoms of such a virulent infection would have shown up early. But Marv never figured there was a career in the doodles with which he decorated his grammar school notebooks.

He says he applied to Manhattan's High School of Music & Art at the intimidating insistance of Benny, a Brooklyn classmate with "a neckless head mounted on what were reliably reported to be cement shoulders." *"—Ay, Marv, youse draw good, raise your hand!"* Benny commanded when the entrance applications were proffered. Marv complied, and was accepted for artistic instruction.

During World War II his knack for drawing funny pictures about Army life found a responsive audience via the *9th Division News* and then *Stars & Stripes.* His professional name got truncated into *Tann* in the process due to a shortage of display type in the bombed-out German printing plants where the papers were produced.

Back in New York after the war, he held various jobs while taking night classes at the Cartoonists and Illustrators School (since renamed the School of Visual Arts). The school was in its infancy and Marv's classes were packed with young hopefuls with names now familiar to cartoon fans: George Booth, Jerry Marcus, Charles Rodrigues, Scott Taber, Dick Cavalli, Peter Porges and Don Orehek come to mind.

While still taking classes, Marv and his fellow students began cracking the magazine markets. Though he succeeded in making a mark swiftly, sur-

Mr. Cruse has been given a free hand to express his thoughts and ideas in any manner he wishes within the scope of this publication. This column does not necessarily represent the editorial views of COMICS SCENE nor our philosophy. The contents is © 1981 by Howard Cruse.

vival was touch-and-go as he married and began raising his family. From today's perspective, the interruptions and detours that loomed large at the time become footnotes to a cartooning career that flourished with the sixties. But Marv can see dark undercurrents in some of his work from that period.

"I did a lot of cartoons that showed male dominance, constant hostile interplay between men and women, with the man always getting in the last word or showing that women were impossible, illogical creatures." The gags were sexist. "I did them as grist for the mill because I knew they would sell.

"I was in an unhappy marriage. I had lived in a world of sexual fantasy. I tried to live a life of which other people would approve, which I deeply resented."

Years later he unexpectedly encountered Leila Hadley, the woman who had been the *Saturday Evening Post* cartoon editor when he was a regular contributor.

WELL, HERE WE PUG, SLOPPING AND SLOOSH-ING THROUGH GOTHAM'S WINTER WONDERLAND!
I DON'T BELIEVE HE SAID THAT!
SQUISH
SLURP
SLOP

ART: ©1982 AND COURTESY MARV TANNENBERG

"We went in to have a drink and catch up on old times. I had already gone through a lot of important changes in my life and was much more open. And she said, 'Do you want me to tell you how I perceived you?' And I said, 'Yes, please do.'

"She said, 'Every time you came into my office, I liked you but I was very scared. I felt that you were a walking time bomb. I thought that you could explode at any minute.'

"To me it was amazing that she picked that up," he muses. "I had put out an image of me as this quiet, nice, very reasonable, very patient and easygoing guy."

But Leila Hadley had, Marv realized, sensed the truth.

As the seventies began, a problem with depth perception intruded increasingly on his concentration, finally making it impossible to draw. Surgery succeeded in correcting the difficulty, but the attendant aggravation had already taken its toll. The emotional fallout from his eyesight failure and a divorce prompted Marv to abandon cartooning. He accepted an executive position in the travel division of a publishing company. End of cartooning story. . . .

. . . But for the "terminal disease" which —quiescent yet unconquered—waited for the moment of vulnerability which would permit a new assault.

Marv recalls it coming out in a scream, during a memorable therapy session five years later. Frustration rose to a boil as he declared: "I want to be a *cartoonist* and I want to be *me*—and I don't know *how!*"

In search of a renewed alliance with his artistic self, Marv spent a summer alone, sketching on the porch of a cottage on an isolated beach. He had in mind creating a comic strip, but it wouldn't happen. In terms of his expectations, the summer was a failure. Yet something important took place, something apparently peripheral to his creative intentions, but actually quite central.

I'm quoting from a description Marv has written about that summer: "It was on a warm endlessly blue beach day that I first met the bird.

"I had jogged to about my half-way point when I spotted this seagull standing at the shallow tidal edge. He remained quietly fixed allowing the incoming wavelets to run across his webbed toes.

"Now if you've ever watched seagulls, that's strange behavior. Seagulls are constantly moving; searching, flying, diving for food. They're never still for more than a few seconds. This one had now remained casually in place for several minutes with no apparent purpose other than to cool his feet in the water. Not very bright seagull behavior I thought, as I drew abreast and on impulse shouted, 'Hey, stupid bird, what are you doing?'

"He ignored me and I jogged on, amused by my own silliness.

"On my return leg he was still there! Posed as imperturbable and as casual as on my first sighting. I couldn't resist. 'Hey, stupid bird—*Que pasa?*' I bawled.

"This time his expression flickered, as if to say, 'I'm standing here in the nice cool water and you're running up and down on a hot beach like a nut—And *I'm* stupid?' "*

"Admit it. You're not even trying to make your first million!"

REPRINTED FROM *SATURDAY REVIEW*

Back at the cottage, Marv sketched the fantasy exchange on paper. But the seagull wasn't satisfied with a one-line walk-on. In the gawky, smart-ass cartoon incarnation of Stupid Bird, the seagull inaugurated an ongoing dialogue with a cartoon Tannenberg, on sheets of paper that accumulated uninhibitedly while Marv was busy failing at his set goal of creating a "real" comic strip.

"It was very schizophrenic," he says now. "I was drawing this stuff [Stupid Bird] on the side—it was a form of therapy. This was just for me, not for anybody else. I was drawing a parallel cartoon life—in the form of a strip sometimes, and other forms which were not identifiable: they were panels, they were strips, they roamed all over. Whatever was happening in my life that day, I drew about it."

But that was just for fun. On the real project of the summer, finding a vehicle with which to reenter the professional cartooning mainstream, Marv was stymied.

"In my months back after I returned from that isolated period, I felt terrible. I was drawing blanks. I was trying to do something I thought I *should* do rather than what I *wanted* to do."

Marv liked none of the work he was producing. He was stalled. Fall passed. Winter moved in.

"It was in February that I felt so frustrated that I said, 'I'm gonna go back and do some of that work that I used to

*From In Search of a Laughable Disease, © 1981 by Marvin Tannenberg.

do out on the island. Just to feel OK.' And I started doing this comic strip about myself and this seagull—*Me and Stupid Bird.*

"And one night the pen literally fell out of my hand because my hand had cramped up. And I realized I had been drawing since nine or 10 and it was two or three o'clock in the morning. And I looked at these stacks of drawings and I said, my God, *this* is what I do. This is it! I've been looking for something that doesn't exist, and what does exist and what's real and what I do well and what I love to do and what has value—I've been doing and I haven't even realized it!

"I remember crying with a sort of sweet pain for several hours. They were the most joyful minutes and hours in my life because I had answered the question: *I want to be a cartoonist and I want to be me and and I don't know how.* I did find out how.

"And that's the direction that I and my work have taken. They're one and the same."

So Marvin Tannenberg pursues his skew. Stupid Bird prods, comments, kvetches and offers Mallomars when the spirit needs bolstering. And city blocks as well as universes away, the world of cartooning commerce waits with the challenges all too familiar to artists who embark on personal creative odysseys:

—Can comics sell as a medium for self expression:

—Can an artist's subjective skew complete with darkened skies abuzz with flying, swinging, fist-flailing superheroes, each a more labored attempt not to duplicate the one before?

—In a commercial comic universe of formulas-gone-berserk, will readers find sustenance in the voices of individual artists willing to look within themselves for human truths?

"Most cartoonists have a lot of creativity," Marvin Tannenberg comments, "but they have that syndrome of *I'm so happy I can draw or write these cartoons* instead of whatever dead-end job they thought they would have to do if they couldn't make a living at cartooning. It seems to stultify them.

"They tend to take a few more chances when they begin, because they're not even aware that they're taking chances. Then they Make It, and for the most part keep on doing the same thing.

"Cartoonists lock themselves into trying to create fantasies for *other people.* It bothers me because I did it for so long. They try to think: what is a good fantasy that *other people* will enjoy. It's a marketing approach, traveling paths that have been traveled before. It's almost impossible not to produce junk work.

"The exceptions are there. Who is more of an innovator than Will Eisner? Eisner is the cartoonist's cartoonist. And Eisner is, at this point in his career, exploring *new* things, as he always has. Others just go on doing the same thing."

When I talk to Marvin Tannenberg, I sense the restlessness of another artist on the move. His own skewed fantasies spill onto sheets of paper bustling with aromatic bag ladies, flashers in trench coats, Geriatricman and his cosmic aluminum walker, Pockabook Girl and Sherlock Snood. Even on the pages where he isn't in view, I feel the impertinent vibes of one Stupid Bird transplanted from a Fire Island beach, ever ready to step from around a hidden corner to offer skeptical commentary on the graphic activity around him. ■

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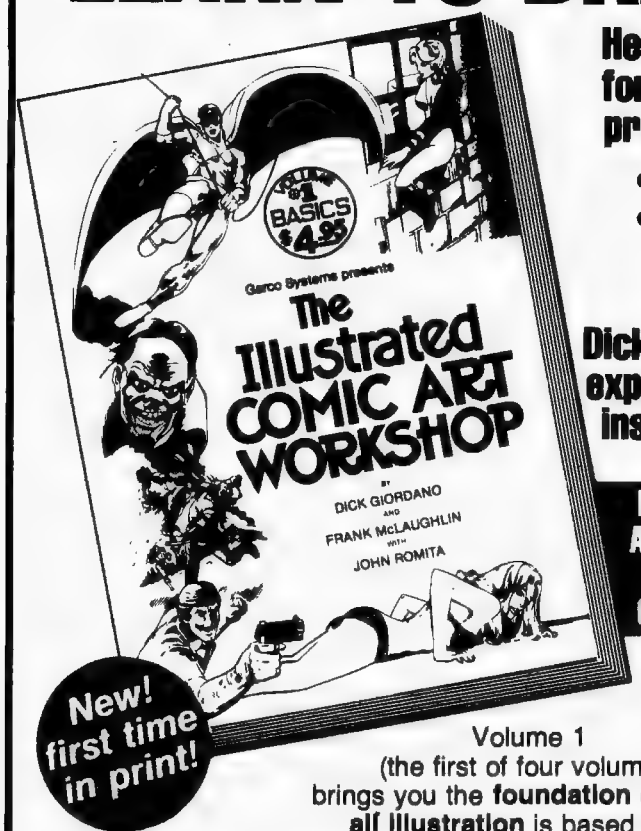

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Jack Kirby

(Continued from page 30)

got my originals back . . . until the inkers became adamant about it. They said, well, why should I get my originals back and the others don't. Having my own standards, I felt that I was right—I should get my originals back. If the other guys wouldn't fight for theirs. . . . I fought for mine; I cajoled for mine. I did anything to get them back. They had no right to them. All they had are the first publication rights; but the drawings remain your own—nobody can take them away from you. And today they have all the drawings I did in the sixties. But I'd have to sue them for it." There is no bitterness in his voice, and yet it is obvious that it hurts. That same emotion comes through when he talks about his second tenure at Marvel, during the seventies.

"I didn't really get a shot," he says. "In fact, it was developing rather well." Kirby was doing *Captain America,* the *Black Panther, 2001,* the *Eternals, Machine Man* and *Devil Dinosaur* during that period. "At the beginning, I think I probably had the best circulation in the line. I enjoyed every one of them. And they were all heading toward things that would astound you. I was giving Marvel all I had; that's part of being professional." But he feels that certain Marvel employees actively worked to undermine him and his books, and that they were successful. "I know who's part of it," he says, "but naming names won't help the situation any. It was a vicious competition," Kirby states, putting a fitting epitaph on that ultimately frustrating part of his career.

During the course of his career, many of Kirby's creations have achieved the status of international stardom. When asked if he has a favorite creation, Kirby says, after a moment's hesitation, "I love the *New Gods.* I love them all. Of course I'm associated with *Captain America,* and I probably always will be. But that's like a symbol. . . . We exist on images. If someone were going to conjure up Kirby, they would probably conjure up *Captain America* at the same time. But as for the other characters, they were all human to me," Kirby says with obvious affection.

As for the future, Kirby has plans to make live-action films. Not specifically science fiction or fantasy; he feels that he has many stories left to tell. One of them is particularly intriguing. "I'd like to make a movie about what the comic book industry was really like," he says, referring to the early years.

Though his *Sky Masters* comic strip in the 50s was a satisfying experience, Kirby has no intention of doing another syndicated strip. "I wouldn't want to work on strips any more. The fact is, they're being squeezed out by advertisers; being made smaller and smaller and you can't read them. When I worked on strips they were large and the color was beautiful. The men who did them were great guys and it was a time to really feel great. I think that's what drew me to comics—that the people who worked in them were just great guys. I didn't go overboard as a fan, but I wanted to do the same kind of thing that they were doing."

Finally, Kirby says that he might still be willing to change hats and try his hand at publishing once more as he had done with Joe Simon in 1954. "I would publish again. And it would be something to be proud of," he says. "Each guy working for the corporation would really be proud. He'd be his own man. I've always done what I've always wanted to do, and I have no regrets. I've done the best I can. But I've written my own script. I had my chance to be a villain and I took my shot at being a hero—just to see what it was like. Not that I wanted to be a hero, but merely as a professional."

Indeed, Kirby steadfastly refuses to identify himself as a hero, although to several generations of comic book fans he is a superhero. "I'm no hero," he says with a shake of his head. "I'm a survivor." Kirby reflects on this self-description for a second and then amends it: "I'm a master survivor." And his goal continues to be the same as it's always been: "I'm out to be a genuinely, competently, fulfilled human being." ■

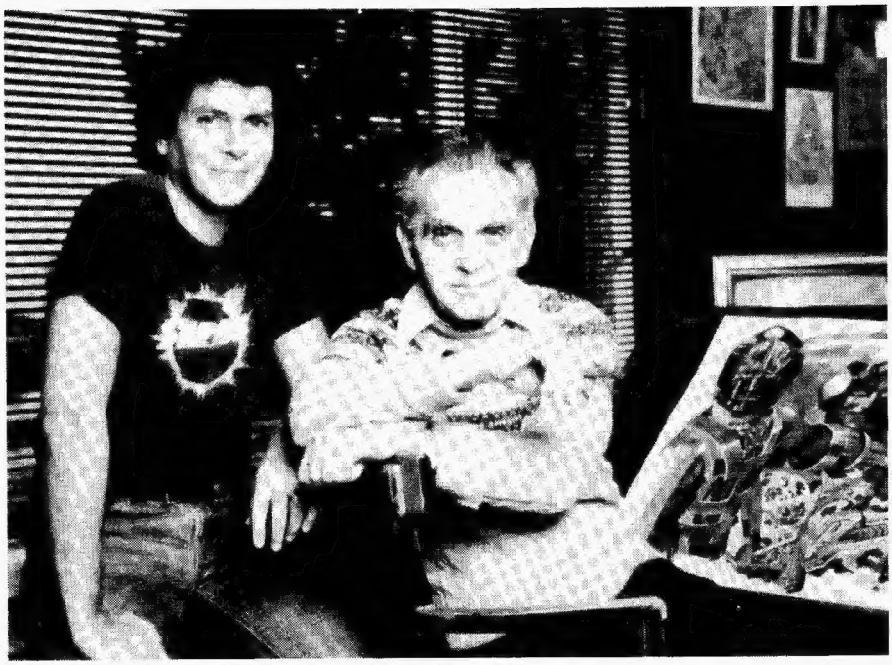

PHOTO: SAM EMERSON

Editor-in-Chief Howard Zimmerman and Kirby.

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The FF and the Inhumans: no coverlines necessary. *The Eternals* were the indirect forerunners of *Captain Victory* and crew.

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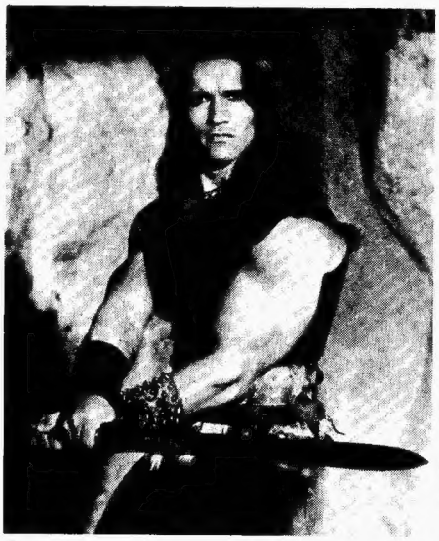
ON THE COVER: Don Bluth Studios will be explored by Dave Hutchison as he goes from department to department to show why Bluth claims to be the head of the best animation house in the world today. We'll also have some early art from the studio's upcoming *The Secret of NIHM.*



Conan

PHOTO: ©1982 Universal

PHOTO: ©1982 AVCO EMBASSY

Swamp Thing

SWAMP THING: From the comics to the movies to Saturday morning television, this muck-encrusted character seems unstoppable. We'll talk with co-creator Len Wein about the character and about writing the novelization of the film.

CONAN: The Dino DeLaurentiis film will finally make it to the theaters in April. To help prepare the discerning viewer, we will present a chat with production designer and accomplished illustrator William Stout. Also, a look at all the Conan-related merchandising.

JACK KATZ: Artist Jack Katz is more than halfway through the *First Kingdom,* a projected 24-volume saga that has been running for years now and lays claim to being the first regularly published alternative press magazine. Howard Zimmerman speaks with Katz about his 30-year career and why he left mainstream comics to break out on his own.

PLUS: Sam Maronie explains exactly who and what *Interfan* is . . . a Character Profile on *Little Orphan Annie* . . . a thrilling look at the *Dick Tracy* comic strip and its mythology by Lenny Kaye . . . and part one of an interview with Osamu Tezuka, the Japanese comic artist and animator who gave us the feature film *Phoenix 2772 AD* and the legendary *Astro Boy!*

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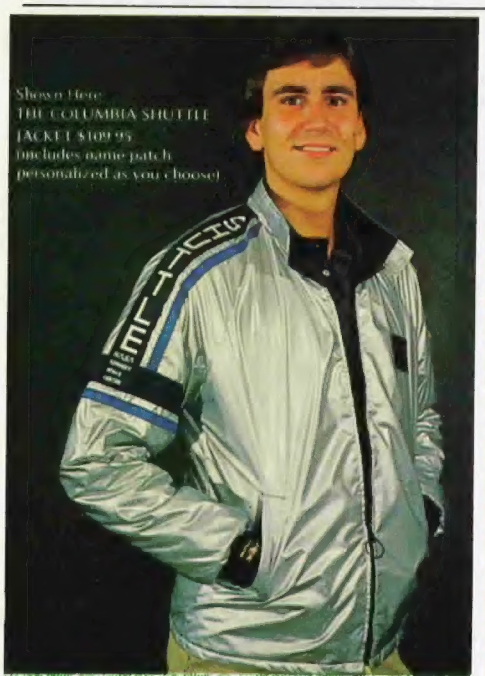

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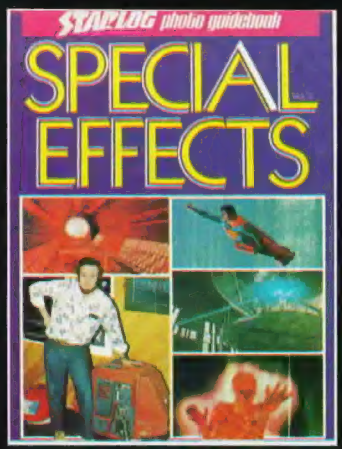

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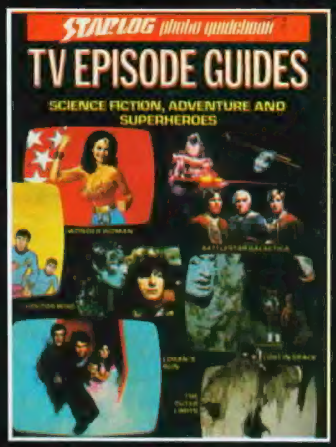

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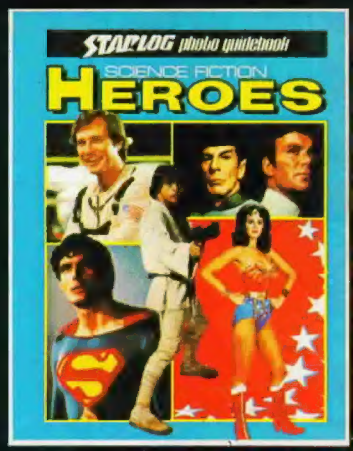

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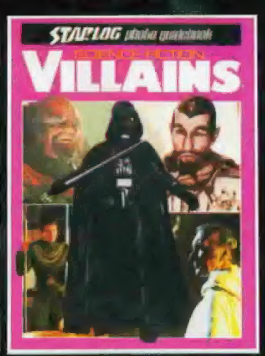

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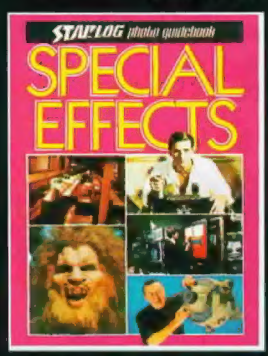

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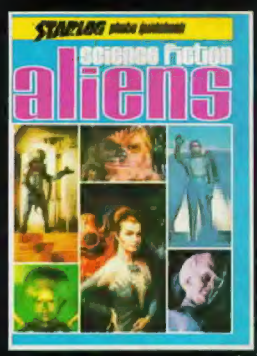

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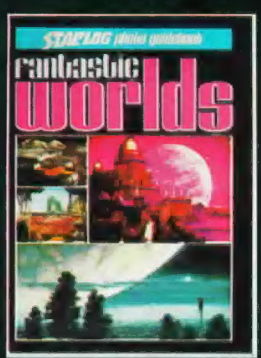

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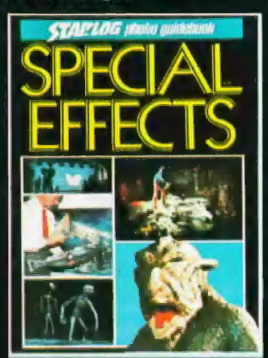

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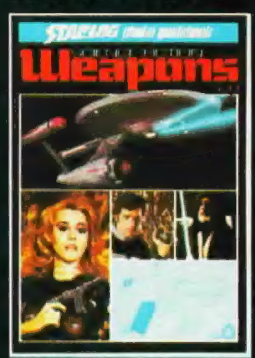

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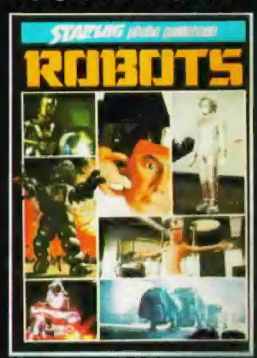

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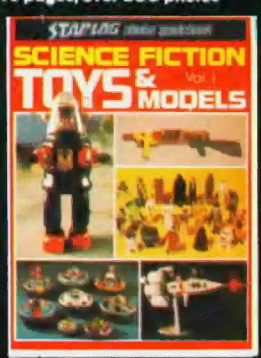

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